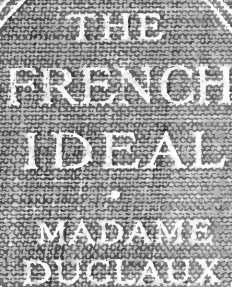
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THE FRENCH IDEAL

PASCAL, FÉNELON

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

MADAME DUCLAUX
(A. MARY F. ROBINSON)

"Vivre généreusement."
Saint François de Sales.

"Je ne vois qu' Infini par toutes les fenêtres,
Et mon esprit, toujours du vertige hanté,
Jalouse du néant l' insensibilité . . .
Ah, ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Etres!"
Baudelaire.

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1911

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I DEDICATE THESE ESSAYS—

PASCAL, THE PRAGMATIST;

FÉNELON, THE THEOSOPHIST;

BUFFON, THE NATURALIST;

LAMARTINE, THE ROMANTIC;—

TO THEIR FIRST FRIEND AND HARBOURER,

THE HON. A. D. ELLIOT.

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I

PASCAL

" C'étoit un ramasseur de coquilles."—NICOLE.

1. *Blaise Pascal. Œuvres.* (*Les grands écrivains de la France.*) 1re série. 3 volumes. *Jusqu'au Mémorial de 1654.* Par MM. LÉON BRUNSCHVICG et P. BOUTROUX. 2me série, en préparation. 3me série. 3 volumes. *Les Pensées* Par M. L. BRUNSCHVICG.
2. *Pascal et son Temps.* Par FORTUNAT STROWSKI. 3 volumes. 1908.
3. *Pascal.* By VISCOUNT ST. CYRES. 1909
4. *Pascal inédit.* Par M. ERNEST JOVY. 2 volumes. 1908–1911.
5. *Discours sur les Passions, etc.* Avec commentaire. Par M. EMILE FAGUET, de l'Académie Française. 1910.
6. *Les Derniers jours de Blaise Pascal.* Par AUGUSTIN GAZIER. 1910.
7. *Pascal. Sa vie religieuse, etc.* Par H. PETITOT. 1911.
8. *L'Angoisse de Pascal.* Par MAURICE BARRÈS, de l'Académie Française. 1909.
9. *La Maladie de Pascal.* Par le Docteur P. JUST-NAVARRE. 1911.
10. *Pascal.* Par VICTOR GIRAUD.
11. *Port Royal.* Par C. A. SAINTE-BEUVE. 6 volumes.
12. *Pascal.* Par ÉMILE BOUTROUX.
13. *Les Sœurs de Pascal.* Par LUCIE FÉLIX-FAURE GOYAU. 1911.

I

PASCAL

None of the great French classics is so near to us, so dear to us, as Pascal. We love them all. Though classics, they are no mere august and laurelled shades; they stand on our side the watershed of the Renaissance; they are modern, living: the amorous and scrupulous Racine; Corneille, the Norman barrister, who renewed the philosophy of the Stoics and made it chivalrous; Molière, of the loose-lipped and melancholy visage, with his deep and lax views of man and life; Bossuet, the brother of Pindar and Isaiah, and yet just a bishop at Versailles; Fénelon, the knight and hero of the Inner Life. . . . But not one of these is adequate to the twentieth century in the same sense as Pascal: pragmatist, physicist, mathematician, gentleman, inventor. If Pascal, however, had been no more than this, he would not have possessed such a magical survival. He would have left a name in science—a great name, such as Leibnitz or Torricelli; and, in literature, a name bathed in the very perfume of courtesy, like Sir Philip Sydney or La Bruyère. It is for other reasons that he is the

companion of our inner selves. He was the master of a style naturally grand and simple, as exact and fiery as the stars; his style was perfect! And the soul of Pascal was sublime and imperfect. Like Tolstoi, he was a saint with pain and difficulty—a human, faulty saint; a feverish but heroic soul.

Physicist, pragmatist, artist in prose, inventor, mathematician, man of the world and saint—Pascal was all these things, but not in a continuous progression, nor were they all blended into a perfect type, like the faces in a composite photograph. No; let us imagine rather a number of Pascals, each distinct, like the rays of a revolving lighthouse—mathematician, natural philosopher, fine gentleman, ascetic, revivalist, man of letters, inventor—succeeding and supplanting each other on the screen of his being, recurrent personalities, appearing and disappearing.

More disconcerting still, sometimes there comes out an inversion—the element appears on the wrong side, as when we turn over a piece of beaten metalwork; where there was a hollow, behold a boss, and the high relief is sunk into a depression. The Pascal, man of the world, lecturing to duchesses, who liked good horses to his coach, plenty of money and everything handsome about him, is the antagonist of the ascetic Pascal who would have no hangings in his bedroom, carried his own tray to and from the kitchen, and looked on brushes and brooms as useless articles of luxury.

In highly organised natures the psychical elements are sometimes dissociated—the machinery, too delicate, too complex, is often out of gear. It is the abundance and importance of these elements that make Pascal's case unique, and his character full of apparent contradictions—so many selves, each animated by a different purpose and activity of its own. His state of mind was never, at any given moment, the sole and stable result of all his moral life: it was the image of one face in a many-figured soul. A certain precipitation, incoherence, inexactness, sometimes result from the overlapping, the brusque appearances and disappearances, of the recurrent elements. To examine such a soul as this is to lose ourselves in listening to the most intricate fugue in all the counterpoint of psychology.

I

Pascal was in an eminent degree the son of his father and the product of his native province: "Blasius Pascal, Patricius Arvernus," as he signed his arithmetical machine, or (according to the freakish letters subscribed to the third *Provinciale*) B.P.A.F.D.E.P.—"Blaise Pascal, Auvergnat, fils d'Etienne Pascal." Certain traits of his volcanic province were so deeply imbedded in his nature that nothing—no conversion, no dissociation—could efface them; even in the latter days of his sainthood

we find their trace, like fossil-shells in stone, sterilised but immortal. Underneath the superstructure of his soul there exists the latent spirit of a place where men, though kind and true and deeply passionate, are cold and harsh; where, born to hardship, they are naturally shrewd and sparing and yet the more appreciative of all amenity; men of more imagination than sensibility, of helpful acts rather than of tender speeches. For in this land so close to the romantic Limousin and the sensuous Périgord there is no mildness of nature, no babble of green fields, none of the abundance and prettiness that come so natural, for instance, to a Fénelon. But nowhere do we find more clearly the relish and courage of a fine sincerity, and a disposition to look plainly in the face both Life and Death.

Pascal has many of the traits of the traditional mountaineer of Auvergne. All his life he was a driver of hard bargains. He had a positive imagination, a keen grasp of facts, a hatred of conventions. The same love of truth inspired his experiments in physical science and his quest of a supernatural reality. He had not the intellectual disinterestedness of a Descartes; his science was utilitarian, always in search of a material benefit; just as his religion was not the mystic's selfless Love of God, but the quest of Salvation—the greatest benefit of all!

On this ancestral foundation (as secret as it is stable, supporting all, but never seen) let us imagine

the delicate superstructure of an individual soul, passionate, violent and charming, the least like the traditional rugged Auvergnat of any that we may suppose. Pascal in his youth, until about his twentieth year (from which date he was a confirmed invalid), was a sort of Prince Charming, a delightful young Archimedes, the darling of Science—"parfaitement beau"; and even later portraits show a handsome, noble face where there lurks an impertinent grace, just peeping through its poetic gravity—the spirit of the *Provinciales* piercing the spirit that will one day prompt the *Pensées*. For although the ultimate character of Pascal's genius was to prove a tragic spiritual grandeur, yet, almost to the end, there was a freakishness mixed up with it, a love of paradox, a delight in subterfuges and disguises, an amusement at throwing dust in the world's eyes and springing out on it in the dark, sometimes as "Louis de Montalte," sometimes as "Amos Dettonville," and sometimes as "Salomon de Tultie." A lonely boy, brought up between two clever, high-spirited, idolising sisters, by a father whose sole scholar he was and who allowed him no other master than himself, the young Pascal grew in grace: subtle, charming, prompt to disdain, proud, and full of self-confidence. Even in later days he never quite lost that *amor dominandi*, that *libido excellendi*, that burning desire to surpass which he himself allowed to be his besetting sin.

"Ceux qui ne le connoissoient pas estoient surpris d'abord quand ils l'entendoient parler dans les conversations, parce qu'il sembloit tousjours qu'il y tenoit le dessus, avec quelque sorte de domination; mais c'estoit le mesme principe de la vivacité de son esprit qui en estoit la cause, et on n'estoit pas longtemps avec luy, qu'on ne vit bien tost qu'en cela mesme il y avoit quelquechose d'aymable."[1]

M. Fortunat Strowski, in that admirable study of his,[2] so novel and so illuminating, so wise and so human, attributes to Pascal's home-bred youth his impatience of contradiction, his imperious tone, his vivacity, and also his candid melancholy. He was in these things more like a girl than a young man, with nerves and vapours, with a grace and a variable charm which passionately attached his friends, and sometimes made them suffer.

Let us etch, behind the noble head of Pascal, the features of his sisters, his Martha and his Mary—Gilberte and Jacqueline, Gilberte who so deeply loved him, and Jacqueline whom he so deeply loved. Gilberte Pascal (who married her cousin from Clermont, Florin Périer) was a notable and a warm-hearted handsome creature, to whose *Lives* we owe our best acquaintance with Pascal and with Jacqueline—a woman of strong mind, keen psychological sense, just criticism. So far as their writings go, Gilberte appears superior to Jacqueline, from whose

[1] *La Vie de Monsieur Paschal escrite par Madame Périer sa sœur.*—Brunschvicg et Boutroux, I, 101.

[2] Fortunat Strowski, *Pascal et son Temps.*

poems, once so famous, the genius has evaporated. . . . Gilberte had in her mind something of the substance of a great critic; and Fléchier said that "even without her kinship with M. Pascal she might have been accounted illustrious in herself." With how fine a touch she shows us the accidental, involuntary character of her brother's genius! How accurately and sensitively she describes his style, and the magic touch with which he made a phrase his own, that he had found and taken *dans les livres* —"quand il les avoit digérées à sa manière elles paroissoient tout autres."

Time has not faded the strong sense of Madame Périer. But it was Jacqueline who won the admiration of Richelieu and Corneille. A few bright charming letters still reflect that affable gaiety, that touching truth of tone, that warmth of heart which made Mademoiselle Pascal the darling of Court and convent, of her family and of letters: Jacqueline was a honey-pot round whom there was always a buzz of wings. Quite without vanity, indifferent to success, she was a small, sweet, pale little person, the plain one of her family, for the smallpox had ruined her colours and thickened her features in early youth. Her gentle brightness hid a will of steel, supple as a spring but never to be broken. She would not gainsay, struggle or oppose, but, biding her time serenely, she was sure in the end to arrive where she wished, which was always in an upward direction.

The little poetess was but fourteen when "Monsieur Corneille" proposed to her to compete for the prize at the poetic games of Rouen—"Elle fit les stances et on luy en porta le prix, avec des trompettes et des tambours, en grande cérémonie. Elle reçut cela avec une indifférence admirable." She was so simple that at fifteen years of age she would dress and undress her dolls like any child of ten. The praises of Richelieu and Corneille had not turned her head—"Nous luy faisions reproche de cette enfance." To-day this sweet childishness and a sort of airy brightness is what remains of Jacqueline's charm. Still one line in the *Mystère de Jésus* keeps a feminine haunting echo of Pascal's genius—"Le drap dans lequel on ensevelit Jésus n'était pas à lui!"

Two nervous, exalted, enthusiastic natures, hiding, like the opal, a flash of fire beneath a milky brightness, Blaise and Jacqueline Pascal were inseparable souls. Twin in the spirit, if not in the flesh, their natures were joined by the most intimate sympathy. Frail of health, consumptive, we may suppose that they resembled the mother they scarcely could remember; while Gilberte reproduced the sound brain and solid heart of the judge and geometer, Etienne Pascal.

II

The father of these extraordinary children was a magistrate of Clermont-Ferrand, in Auvergne,

where Gilberte was born in 1620, Blaise Pascal in 1623 (on the 19th of June), and Jacqueline in 1625 —the year before her mother's death. In 1630 Etienne Pascal sold his charge and his estates, and moved to Paris in order to educate his children.

He was himself a mathematician of repute, a friend of Mersenne, Roberval, Huygens, Gassendi, an amiable adversary of Descartes, and deeply interested in the science of physics. Only our own age has seen such changes in our views, such startling new conceptions. When Etienne Pascal moved from Clermont to Paris, Galileo was still alive and Newton was unborn. The notion of a single finite earth surrounded by a series of eternal crystal spheres had only lately given place to the new and dazzling idea of infinite worlds dispersed throughout illimitable space. He was of the first generation that should live, as we live, between two Infinities: the infinitely great (so recently revealed by the progress of astronomy) and the infinitely little, which the men of his time perceived, not as we do, by microscopes or chemical scales, but by the inductions of mathematics. Yet Etienne Pascal and his friends dreamed all our dreams—those dreams which we have made realities. Father Mersenne imagined a diving ship for submarine navigation [1]—a monster of copper and leather with port-holes, ventilators, and tubes communicating with the surface; and the same Mersenne devised a new

[1] *Histoire de la Marine Française*, par Charles de la Roncière.

"machine à voler,"[1] and would doubtless have been surprised to learn that fourteen-score years must elapse ere his invention should be put in practice. But what, after all, are fourteen-score years to men who live in the constant presence of Infinity?

In this world of academic conversations, the precocity of young Pascal was abundantly stimulated. At his father's house the principal savants of Paris were accustomed to meet in order to discuss the principal scientific questions of the hour; as, for instance, What is the cause of specific gravity? Is it a quality inherent in the object that falls or an attraction from without? In these learned reunions young Pascal held his own, and sometimes would contribute remarks and ideas so notable that his father decided to escort him to those more important gatherings, held at the convent of Father Mersenne, which were the beginnings of the Académie des Sciences. When Blaise Pascal was between sixteen and seventeen years of age, he wrote "A Treatise on Conic Sections." Of the mathematical excellence of the few pages which remain of this unprinted study we dare not speak. What strikes us chiefly in them is that, at seventeen years of age, the mind of Pascal worked in the same manner as during his years of maturity. He pounced, as it were, on some discovery whose value hitherto had been unrecognised, which dwindled in obscurity, imperfectly vitalised, until Pascal picked it up, held

[1] *Revue du Mois.* Février, 1911.

it in the warmth of his hand, gave it a twist, breathed on it, and the thing began to live. Pascal was much less an inventor than an experimenter, an organiser. Nicole called him a "ramasseur de coquilles"! —a picker up of shells (from which he plucked the pearls), a collector, that is to say, rather than a creator. There exists in the Apocrypha a legend of the childhood of Christ which expresses the idea more justly: the children of Bethlehem were playing in the road, making mud-sparrows, when the divine Child passed that way, and took the small clay images into His hand; breathing upon them, He filled them with life, and sent them flying up into the sky. So Pascal; the images, let us admit, were often not of his framing, but he gave them life. He was an Animator, and the birds that he sent winging out of the dust have flown through the centuries even to our own times.

III

The story has often been told how Etienne Pascal, being compromised in a rising against the Chancellor Séguier, fled from Paris in 1638, leaving his children in the charge of a faithful housekeeper. But these children were already personages. Jacqueline, at twelve years old, was the author of a book of poems and a favourite at Court. One day, meeting the Cardinal de Richelieu at the house of the Duchess of Aiguillon, she asked her father's

pardon so prettily in verse that Richelieu not only recalled him to Paris, but soon afterwards gave him the important post of Adjutant to the Intendant of Normandy, and sent him to Rouen in 1639.

All Pascal's work and inventions were struck out directly from the friction of life. Impressed into the tremendous business of his father's office at Rouen, the young mathematician, at sixteen years of age, conceived the idea of a mechanical ready reckoner, independent of the will, and gave himself to this invention with a passion and energy which filled more than two years of his youth, devising more than fifty different models, and overseeing in person the artisans entrusted with their carrying out. How characteristic of Pascal this swooping down on a chance problem, this fierce and obstinate pursuing of it to a sure result! Lord St. Cyres was happily inspired in calling him "the knight-errant of geometry, wandering hither and thither in search of questions worthy of his steel." The calculating machine of Pascal is the ancestor of all our modern multiplicators, the little boxes that hand out our change on the counters of shops, the mechanical computators of taxi-cabs, the mathematical machines used in scientific laboratories. And Pascal pursued this adventure as simply as later he designed or perfected the barometer, the hydraulic press, the wheelbarrow, the omnibus, the dray.

The town of Rouen, in which he spent seven years, was a centre of that neo-Stoicism which, to

the France of those days, meant all that the different forms of neo-Buddhism—Theosophy, Christian Science, the Higher Thought, etc.—have meant of late to our English-speaking world: a religion within a religion, a cultus of the cultured, having its high priests and its high places. In Rouen, where the editions of Du Vair fell frequent from the press, Pascal could not but make acquaintance with that renewer of the Stoics, as well as with Montaigne (for every country gentleman in those days had a copy of the *Essays* on his mantelpiece), and above all with Epictetus. The two last were thenceforth incorporate with Pascal's mind. We shall hear of his debt to Montaigne. From Epictetus he took that bold plain writing, that direct bareness of thought and word, that simplicity and homeliness of image, which make the style of Pascal as alive as fire or running water. The ideas of these masters were a preparation to Port Royal, for the Stoics made morality completely interior: they were necessarians, who eliminated from the world every element of chance and spontaneity; and their dogma of universal determinism was combined with an idea of fraternal love and mutual charity.

In Rouen of late their doctrines had suffered a romantic, heroic transfiguration in the plays of a poet, Corneille, a friend of the family of Pascal. The *Cid*, the *Horatii*, *Cinna*, peopled the stage with creations whose force of will, whose passions tragically at war with necessity and virtue, whose mastery

over self, whose aloof, detached, triumphant souls embody the principles of Du Vair and of his teacher.

The Stoics left their mark on Pascal; a more crucial experience was that of his first contact with the spirit of Jansenism.

In January 1646 Etienne Pascal, being at that time about fifty years of age, slipped on the ice and put his hip-bone out of joint; a long illness ensued which orthodox surgery failed to cure, and the Intendant put himself in the hands of two country gentlemen living near Rouen, M. des Landes and M. de la Bouteillerie, who had a great reputation as amateur bone-setters and spent their lives in doctoring the poor.

These two honest quacks were Quakers—or rather they were Jansenists. During a stay of three months which they made in the Intendant's house at Rouen, the gentlemen bone-setters spoke frequently with young Pascal of predestination, of necessity, and grace. There was in their system a unity, a logic, a completeness which awoke Pascal's enthusiasm. Nothing is more difficult for a man of science to believe than the doctrine of free-will; nothing appears more evident than predestination, or (as we say) determinism. M. des Landes and M. de la Bouteillerie did not only expound and explain: they promised. They aroused an inkling of unutterable hopes. Their doctrine of the interior man, their assurance of a new heart and an inward illumination, their revelation of the miracle of grace,

transfigured the moral horizon of the young Stoic. He read with avidity the books of St. Cyran, of Arnauld, of Jansenius, of St. Augustine, of all the spiritual heroes of Port Royal. We cannot imagine now the piercing freshness, the poignant novelty of these treatises—unless, perhaps, we picture some earnest Russian suddenly acquainted with the works of Tolstoi. For Pascal, at least, they constituted a new gospel, a divine initiation.

Until he had reached his three-and-twentieth year, nothing foretold in Pascal that passion of high spirituality, that religious genius, which succeeding centuries associate with his name. As a child he had re-invented geometry, and with a piece of charcoal had sketched his "barres" and his "ronds" on all the walls and floors of his father's house. He had not "found religion." He had written, as soon as he could write, a "Treatise on Sounds"; at sixteen, a "Treatise on Conic Sections"; at twenty he had invented his arithmetical machine. The energy and passion of his nature had been wholly absorbed by science.

No doubt he had learned his catechism at his father's knee, had been confirmed in his parish church at Paris; but the early history of Pascal shows no trace of the religious precocity of a Saint Theresa. At this date the Pascals were pious folk, but not among the unco' good; Catholics and Stoics, physicists and churchgoers, they cared for science, poetry, success, advancement, fame and fortune;

and confidently hoped to make the best of both worlds. They had "une vertu morale, mais point du tout une vertu chrestienne," as Marguerite Périer was to write of them.

And now, his whole nature shaken by the long and dangerous illness of his father, the young Pascal listened to the two honest quacks who came to cure him. And there was something in their doctrine that captivated the scientific spirit of the inventor, although nothing in these missionaries' eyes was so dire an obstacle to salvation as the desire of knowledge: *libido sciendi.* Saints and charlatans, their animus against official science was as sincere as their belief in grace. Yet it was the intelligence of Pascal rather than his heart which followed their teaching. They spoke of a Hidden Unity—*Deus absconditus*—incommensurable with the narrow intelligence of man; they spoke of the corruption of our nature by original sin, the perverseness of the human heart, unreconciled to the idea of God; their voice sank as they told of the many called, the few chosen. And the two Norman Jansenists opened to Pascal's eager mind a whole new conception of life, appalling, wonderful, full of eternal and divine compensations.

How marvellous was their division of the universe into different orders, or hierarchies, of which some are visible but vain, others intangible, unseen, yet eternal and alone important! And how wonderful their assurance that we may pass beyond the limited experience of individuals and lose ourselves in that immense unknown Reality which eddies unseen

behind the screen of Nature! This new religion —with its supernatural Grace playing like a ray of heavenly sunshine over the fixed order of pre-ordained necessity, like sunshine on the iceberg it may melt; this mingling of miracle and a strict determinism was yet more akin to the central self of Pascal than the teaching of the Stoics with their commandments of law and duty. He was as a man who hears, enchanted, bewildered, some words of his native language, long forgotten, but suddenly aroused into life and remembrance.

Pascal was born to convert and subdue. His first disciple was Jacqueline, the charming young poetess, light-hearted and reasonable. She was at that time sought in marriage by a young councillor of the Parliament of Rouen. Perhaps an unconscious jealousy aided Pascal to pursue her conversion and break off the match? Next he persuaded his father, the convalescent; then his married sister and her husband. Gilberte Périer, a young beauty of six-and-twenty, arrived in Rouen innocently full of her consequence, intelligence and station; entered in her laced gown, her bonny freshness and her worldly ways—was touched by grace, and thenceforth went austerely in sad-coloured garments and plainly braided hair. Jacqueline gave up her hope of marriage, her young glory, her pretty gift of verse, aspired to the veil, and lived (as near as might be in the world) the strict religious life.

For Jansenism, if a theory, was even more a way of life, a practice of sanctity, a continual training

in austerity and virtue—a reform of Catholic doctrine—a return to the Primitive Church—a Renaissance of Christianity. M. de la Bouteillerie and M. des Landes were enthusiastic apostles of this sublime renewal; and the ardour, the fanaticism, the difficulty, the audacity of their enterprise inflamed the daring heart of Pascal.

If Port Royal was the ideal of young Pascal, Pascal himself, at three-and-twenty years of age, was very far indeed from being the ideal of Port Royal. He was still instinct with the *libido sciendi*, the *libido sentiendi*, the *libido dominandi;* the lust after knowledge, the desire of feeling, the love of power: three dragons that bar all access to the Jansenist's narrow, thorny way! . . . Blaise Pascal was full of pent activities and vague premonitions of his gifts. That humble, mediocre, sober style of speech; that way of mind, exact, severe and plain, which Port Royal demanded of its penitents, were not in the manner of this passionate, exalted, this extravagant family of Auvergnats—children of the volcano, and friends of Corneille! The young convert—who doubtless felt already the promise of the *Provinciales* swelling in his breast—offered to place his pen at the service of Port Royal. We can imagine the startled piety of his director, M. de Rebours. Was this meekness? Was this contrition?

"Je lui dis avec ma franchise et ma naïveté ordinaires, que nous avions vu leurs livres et ceux de leurs adversaires; que c'était assez pour lui faire entendre que nous étions de leurs sentiments. Il

m'en témoigna quelque joie. Je lui dis ensuite que je pensais que l'on pouvait, suivant les principes du sens commun, démontrer beaucoup de choses que les adversaires disent lui être contraires. . . . Ce furent mes propres termes, où je ne crois pas qu'il y ait de quoi blesser la plus sévère modestie."[1]

This was not the opinion of the severer M. de Rebours, who found his proselyte's discourse "*étrange*"—"and answered me in so mild and modest a way that my pride and presumption would have been turned aside, had I possessed them." And so the dialogue continues, hopelessly embroiled; the young geometrician eager to break a lance for the *Augustinus;* the old confessor anxious above all to refrain the vanity, the love of supremacy, which he discerns in his imperious penitent: "de sorte que toute celle entrevue se passa dans cette équivoque et dans un embarras qui a continué dans toutes les autres, et qui ne s'est pu débrouiller."[1]

M. de Rebours was a leader of souls—he was not a fisher of men. He saw, plainly enough, the pride, the passion, the love of combat and the lust of sway in his new penitent; he did not discern his incomparable value, nor guess that he rejected a pearl of great price.[2] And Pascal, thrown back upon himself, with all his useless fervour unemployed, indignant at these "rebuffades"—the buffets and rebuffs of his confessor—began unconsciously to seek

[1] Lettre de Blaise Pascal à Madame Périer, sa sœur. Brunschvicg: *Pensées d'Opuscules*, p. 85.

[2] For these details of Pascal's first conversion, we refer the reader to M. H. Petitot's *Pascal: sa vie religieuse.*

another way to employ the imprisoned genius in his brain. Pascal was born to invent, to argue, to teach, to conquer—not to submit. Had M. de Rebours been M. de Saint-Cyran, he would not have sent his neophyte—his passionate, despotic neophyte—disappointed and empty away.

Pascal's was an active, emotional nature. He saw no battlefield to employ his ardours. He had converted all his family—pursued for heresy one of the most popular preachers in Rouen. Having swept all before him, he suddenly flagged. The *libido sciendi* still held him fast. A Jansenist in March, and an apostle; by October he was all aflame for some new experiments on atmospheric pressure. . . . Men often take their imagination for their heart, and believe themselves religious because they admire religion.

Pascal, at three-and-twenty years of age, was a delicate, handsome youth. In the sketch by Domat, and in the portrait of the Bibliothèque Nationale, both of them taken later, he still looks very young. The hair, fine and soft, not very abundant, waves on the shoulders in the graceful fashion of those days. The eyes, long and yet large, with their look of candour and melancholy, of dreamy aloofness, under their arched noble brows, shed over the cold yet pleasant features their own poetic and peculiar charm. They recall the eyes of Shelley, and are such as we associate with genius of the automatic and unconscious sort—that which finds and takes, not that which seeks and wrestles: Mozart, not

Beethoven; Raphael, not Michel Angelo. The nose, too long for a perfect proportion, is aquiline and proud, with distended nostrils. The lips (which in the death-mask we shall know so firm, so patient, breathing inaudibly their *secretum meum mihi!*), those lips in youth were full, pursed a little, almost pouting, in a brooding sort of smile. Sorrowful in the portrait of Domat, the smile of the portrait in the National Library has an air of pleasant impertinence, a gallant disdain, that is quite taking and agreeable, and this, we imagine, was the expression of the Pascal of 1646, a youth of twenty-three.

The health of this young man (who had suffered in his infancy from a tubercular enteritis) had already succumbed to the stress and strain of his intellectual life; but between the recurrent crises of a nervous exhaustion, his elastic temperament rebounded, fine and fresh and fierce, always ready to carry war into any man's camp, to argue, convert, oppose, invent, combine. He was constantly occupied with the construction of his arithmetical machines, which could only be produced by the most skilled artisans under his direct supervision; he supplied them to Christian Huygens, Roberval, the Chancellor Séguier, Queen Christina of Sweden, and many others. I have seen and handled one of the rare examples that remain; its starry wheels are hewn and filed out of the solid brass; at once strong and exquisite in the simplicity of its precision, it recalls the literary style of Pascal! We must

imagine him as a young incipient Edison or Marconi, full of the love of power, the tenacious ambition of supremacy, the impatience of incompetence. Fastidious and fine, curious and combative, little in his way of life as yet suggests the saint. Even his conversion—which his passionate and arbitrary spirit enforced on kith and kin—appears to have been accompanied with scant renewal of the heart. His life was pure; but it had ever been pure. Too great an intellectual flame consumed him to leave place for sensations less subtle. . . .

IV

It was in October 1646, a few months after his adhesion to the doctrines of Jansenius, that Pascal met in Rouen his friend Pierre Petit, the military engineer, on his way to Dieppe. Petit told him of a remarkable experiment made three years ago in Italy, which Mersenne had tried to repeat in Paris, but imperfectly, owing to the difficulty of procuring the glass pipes and tubes in the necessary proportions; which experiment, if it could be made, would prove that Nature does not abhor a vacuum, as the schoolmen maintained. Pascal, with his hatred of fine phrases that mean nothing definite—Pascal, the skilful experimenter and inventor in physical science—caught fire at once. There was one of the best glass foundries in France at Rouen. Pascal ordered the necessary pipes—forty feet long—for water or

wine, and the tubes—four feet in length—for quicksilver; and began to prove, with endless variation and recurrence, that theory of atmospheric pressure which is one of his greatest contributions to science, but with which, here, we should have little to do, save that by some of its side-consequences it really did affect the soul, and showed the workings of the mind, of Pascal.

Surely no experiment ever woke such a storm of controversy. Almost immediately Pascal's discovery was contested; he was accused of having filched it from Torricelli. In Poland, a monk, Valerio Magni, claimed precedence. Pascal had instructed Florin Périer to carry the tube from the valley to the summit of the Puy de Dome, measuring the height of the quicksilver at the top and at the bottom; and, when he heard of this, Descartes, ever jealous of his superiority, declared that *he* had suggested this particular experiment.

Of late years the discussion has revived with even greater virulence. In a series of articles published in the *Revue de Paris*[1] M. Félix Mathieu (with a subtility, a passion, a prejudice, a partiality, that there is a wild justice in applying to the author of the *Provinciales*) renews and reinforces the complaint of Descartes. He accuses Pascal of having stolen another experiment from his friend, Auzoult of Rouen, and concludes with a definite accusation: "La lettre que Pascal dit avoir écrite le 15

[1] *Revue de Paris*, 1er avril, 15 avril, 1er mai, 1906; 1er mars, 15 mars, 15 avril, 1907.

novembre 1647 à son beau-frère Périer pour le prier de monter sur le Puy de Dome est un faux."

But Pascal possesses the mysterious power of certain magical personalities (such as Shelley, Mary Stuart, Joan of Arc) of surviving indefinitely in the hearts of their race, and provoking posthumous passions and adorations no less fervent than those excited by their living presence. The diatribe of M. Félix Mathieu has stimulated the lovers of Pascal to fresh researches and to a new display of zeal. The *Défense de Pascal* by M. Abel Lefranc, the critical studies of M. Milhaud, M. Louis Havet, M. Brunschvicg and M. Duhem; above all, the *Histoire de Pascal* of M. Strowski, and the incomparable edition of Pascal's works by MM. Brunschvicg and Boutroux, have enlarged our knowledge and let some light on this obscure and puzzling chapter in the history of science. And we may rest assured that Pascal was *not* a forger, nor a thief, nor a scientific brigand; that he did not "fake" a letter, antedated, and produce it as evidence of his priority in a discovery; on the other hand, we cannot acquit him of some precipitancy and prejudice, of certain grave inaccuracies of statement, of a way of wresting facts to prove his own advantage which sprang from his passionate conviction that he, and not his adversary, *must* be in the right. He, too, was jealous of his superiority. His "humeur bouillante" (as Jacqueline calls it) more than once led him astray. And the nervous breakdown from which he suffered at this time flung him from mood

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to mood, from an excitable restlessness to a disdainful languor, while exaggerating that "inexactitude" which Nicole, his friend of Port Royal, was later to deplore, in the "ramasseur de coquilles."

V

It was in the middle of his experiments at Rouen, during the summer of 1647, that the irascible and charming young inventor fell seriously ill. So soon as he was fit to travel, his father sent him to Paris in the charge of Jacqueline, his nurse and secretary, in order to consult the best physicians. His malady puzzled the Norman doctors: a constant dull headache, an invincible languor, an incapacity for sustained attention, a coldness and numbness of the feet and legs simulating paralysis. Dragging himself to and fro on crutches, fed on asses' milk, filled with nervous qualms as to his bodily health, and with still graver apprehensions as to the destiny of his immortal soul, Pascal arrived in Paris to find himself famous. The news of his tests and trials, which proved the possibility of a vacuum, had preceded his arrival. The initial attempts made in Italy, in 1643, were little known in France; it was not yet certain that Torricelli had invented an experiment, which Pascal had applied, and from which he had deduced a law; the savants of Mersenne's circle confused the experiments of Florence and the experiments of Rouen, some attributing all the merit to Galileo and his pupils, the others ascribing the entire honour to Pascal.

Meanwhile the invalid was torn in twain between the conception of eternity and that "recherche des secrets de la Nature qui ne nous regardent point, qu'il est inutile de connaître," which Jansenius condemns in his *Réformation de l'homme intérieur.* Torricelli's experiment was more to him than just a brilliant scientific proof : it meant that we mortals, living on the earth, are surrounded by forces of whose existence nothing in our senses makes us aware, although their energies encompass all our life, perpetually acting on us, pressing us on every side, and causing the familiar facts of our universe. Atmospheric pressure was, to the world of 1647, as illuminating and startling a conception as the existence of radium or the discovery of the Hertzian waves has been to our own times. So (while Pascal accompanies Jacqueline to church and visits with her the house of Port Royal in the Rue Saint Jacques, abetting her in her desire to take the veil) he is none the less passionately interested in the arguments of Roberval and Mersenne. . . . The variety and infinity of Nature moves him to a religious presentiment of that which lies behind; and at this moment, probably, he writes in his *Pensées:* "Que cet effet de la Nature, qui vous semblait impossible auparavant, vous fasse connaître qu'il peut y en avoir d'autres que vous ne connaissez pas encore ! " His mind was like one of those great modern organs, with their various keyboards, their sets of stops and pedals, which seem an orchestra rather than an instrument; with one

hand he pressed the clavier of physical science, while the other pulled out the "Celestial voice"; and from this dissociation of his spiritual elements there resulted a harmony in complexity, but also some lessening of mental co-ordination.

In September 1647 Pascal and Jacqueline were in Paris in their father's house of the Rue Brisemiche. Two letters, one from each, published in the edition of MM. Brunschvicg and Boutroux, paint for us the curious life they led, made up in equal parts of science, medicine and devotion. It is Sunday, the 22nd of September. Pascal is at church hearing vespers when some friends call on Jacqueline, and ask if her brother can receive Descartes at nine o'clock the morrow morning. "Je fus assez empeschée de respondre, à cause que je sçavois qu'il a peine à se contraindre et à parler, particulièrement le matin" (a frequent symptom with nervous invalids). In the course of the evening the barber-surgeon calls to bleed Pascal, and on the morrow morning, languid but lucid, he receives the great philosopher (who was his father's antagonist), with several of Descartes' disciples, and his own old friend, Roberval. After admiring the arithmetical machine, they fell to talking of Pascal's experiments on the vacuum, which Descartes immediately declared to be no void, but filled with a "subtle matter"—"Mon frère luy répondit ce qu'il put." We hear an echo of the weariness of Pascal, of the physicist's incurable disdain for the metaphysician, to whom theories are as real as facts, and words

as true as things. "And M. de Roberval, thinking my brother was too tired to talk, fell foul of M. Descartes, who answered somewhat tartly."

Thereupon the savants depart in the same coach, bandying jokes and bantering "un peu plus fort que jeu." But on the Tuesday morning at eight o'clock Descartes returned. He examined Pascal's physical state, "and told him to lie in bed very late of a morning, every day, until tired of lying still, and so take plenty of broth"—not bad advice for neurasthenia. But they must have spoken of many other things, adds Jacqueline, for Descartes remained until eleven o'clock—"but I cannot tell you what they said, for yesterday I was not present; we were so busy all day long, preparing and getting him to take his first bath." 'Tis a pity that Mary then played the part of Martha, that Jacqueline did not hear the talk that went forward, since, for lack of such a witness, we shall never know if indeed Descartes did in any degree suggest the great experiment of the Puy de Dome! On the 15th of November Pascal wrote to Périer that letter, giving the conditions of the test, which M. Mathieu assumes to be a forgery. On the 13th of December Descartes wrote from Holland to Mersenne: "I had told M. Pascal it would be well to try if the quicksilver rose as high in the tube, when it is on the top of a mountain, as when it is at the bottom; I don't know if he made the experiment." In June 1648 Descartes was again in Paris. On the 22nd of September (just a year after the first meeting of Pascal and Descartes)

Florin Périer writes from Clermont-Ferrand to state that he has satisfactorily accomplished the great experiment which proved the reality of atmospheric pressure. And Descartes writes to Carcavi, on the 11th of June, 1649—

"Je vous prie de m'apprendre le succez d'une expérience qu'on m'a dit que Monsieur Pascal avoit faite, ou fait faire, sur les montagnes d'Auvergne, pour sçavoir si le Vif-argent monte plus haut dans le tuyau estant au pied de la montagne, et de combien il monte plus haut que dessus. J'aurois droit d'attendre cela de luy plustost que de vous, parce que c'est moy qui l'ay advisé, il y a deux ans, de faire cette expérience et qui l'ay assuré que bien que je ne l'eusse pas faite, je ne doutois point du succez."

And again on the 17th of August of the same year—

"Je vous suis très obligé de la peine que vous avez prise de m'écrire le succez de l'expérience de Monsieur Pascal. . . . J'avois quelque interet de le sçavoir à cause que c'est moy qui l'avois prié il y a deux ans de la vouloir faire . . . sans quoi il n'eust eu garde d'y penser, à cause qu'il estoit d'opinion contraire."

Descartes attributes Pascal's silence and bad grace to the influence of Roberval—"il suit les passions de son Amy"—for Descartes and Roberval were aye at daggers drawn. Nothing can be clearer than the claims of the philosopher; but we must remember that when he visited Pascal in Paris, he scarcely seemed to grasp the drift and crux

of the question, his mind being full of a metaphysical conception of his own "la matière subtile." And was it not Descartes who wrote in one of his letters to Mersenne, in speaking of the works of Viète: "On doit se persuader que nos neveux ne trouveront jamais rien en cette matière que je ne pusse avoir trouvé aussi bien qu'eux, si j'eusse voulu prendre la peine de le chercher"? Such appears to have been his habitual attitude of mind. In the eyes of their contemporaries—of Auzoult, Roberval, Périer, Pascal himself—Pascal was the inventor of the experiment of the Puy de Dome. But it is probable that every man living at a certain lofty intellectual level has in his mind an obscure inkling—a germ—of the proximate discovery which is about to reform our views of Nature: so that, the fact once proved, in all sincerity he recognises an idea which he possessed, indeed, but knew not how to formulate. The ray of sunshine may have slanted across a whole mountain-side before it leaps into flame on the burning-glass—but only the burning-glass gave birth to the fire!

That burning-glass, I think, was the mind of Pascal. And certainly it was Pascal who, transporting to water the experiments he had made on air, invented the theory of the equilibrium of liquids, and, afterwards, the hydraulic press. But all this contest and controversy were infinitely humiliating, exasperating in the last degree. One line in the *Pensées* is eloquent of his distress—

"J'avais passé longtemps dans l'étude des sciences abstraites, et le peu de communication qu'on en peut avoir m'en avait dégoûté."

The lack of communication: Torricelli in Florence; Descartes in Holland; Mersenne in Paris; and Pascal himself, with his father and family, in Auvergne (for to the mountains of his native place old Etienne had carried off his treasured son and daughter, to break the ties that knit them to Port Royal and to restore their health). How at this distance should these men of science confer together, establishing exactly what belongs to each? They stand at the ends of the earth; and soon a vaster abyss divides them. Torricelli dies in 1647, Mersenne in 1648, Descartes in 1650, and Etienne Pascal himself was to die in 1651. Pascal remains alone.

"Ah, le peu de communication qu'on peut avoir!"

VI

But it was not religion that reaped the benefit of his detachment from physical science. A little while before the death of Etienne Pascal, his son, returning from Paris to Auvergne, had met, and struck up a great friendship with, a gifted young man some four or five years younger than himself—the Duke of Roannez. In a transport of mutual affection, the young inventor was admitted to the serious, yet elegant and intellectual, circle which the Duke

adorned, and installed in a set of chambers in his mansion. The two were inseparable. Pascal found this noble world enchanting—far more delightful than that where Descartes and the vociferous Roberval went jeering and bantering in their jars and quarrels. In this new sphere there reigned something noble yet subtle, romantic yet sincere, which touched a secret fibre in Jacqueline's brother, accustomed from his childhood to the refinements of the *Précieux*. To Pascal's dying day, the young Duke, his sister Mademoiselle de Roannez, and their friends, those charming sceptics Méré and Miton, existed in his mind as persons nonpareil.

When in the *Pensées* Pascal opposes to the *esprit de géometrie* (the spirit of Roberval and Descartes) that *esprit de finesse* which he so much prefers, he is giving the palm to his new friends and praising that in which they exceed the old ones—penetration, charm, intuition, feeling, knowledge of life.

The sense of the complexity of things, the discernment of all the simultaneous elements which go to make up the world and life, can only be divined by a spontaneous instinct, a mother-wit, foreign to the reason of philosophers and savants, but possessed sometimes by the mere children of Nature, and sometimes by men and women of the world. Tact, and taste and feeling, the sense of action, the gift of judging and gauging at a glance, the natural magic of the heart, are qualities which Pascal placed at once in the first rank; though his reason told him that the greatest minds of all must unite the qualities

of his new friends and the virtues of the old . . . must feel and divine, yet reason and deduce; must grasp the drift of things by intuition, yet have the patience to speculate in abstract thought. Pascal with his passionate nature was carried away by his enthusiasm for the noble life, for the elaboration of an *élite*. He left off thinking exclusively of his salvation, he ceased pursuing the chimeras of abstract science, and began to acquiesce in the life he found so pleasant—gave himself thoroughly up to this novel existence, stifling that inner voice which still demanded something different.

In Poitou or in Paris, he liked being in the circle of his friend the Duke, both because its exquisite refinement was agreeable to him, and because of that air of tender flattery which unobtrusively surrounded him, soothing his natural desire for supremacy. His capacity for assimilating the thoughts of others, and, as it were, ripening them into action and invention, found a fresh nourishment; he felt himself growing, augmenting, acquiring, and was no longer haunted by that sense of sudden incapacity, that feeling of inability to advance any farther along a given path which so often had driven him from one thing to another. While he enjoyed the charm of his new friends, his analytic mind sought the elements of their quality. Now and then he would draw out his tablets and make a note. From the *Pensées* of Pascal we might reconstruct the code of the "honnête homme"—the commandments of the gentleman!

They would run somewhat in this way :—

1. *Never speak of self.*

(Le moi est haïssable. Voulez vous qu'on dise du bien de vous? N'en dites pas.)

2. *Never repeat what you hear.*

(Si tous les hommes savaient ce qu'ils disent l'un de l'autre, il n'y aurait pas quatre amis dans le monde.)

3. *Be ready to take trouble on slight occasions.*

(Le respect signifie : je m'incommoderais bien si vous en aviez besoin, puisque je le fais déjà sans que cela vous serve.)

4. *Be sparing of excuses and apologies, which weary at best and often inflame the offence.*

(Révérence parler : il n'y a rien de mauvais que leur excuse.)

5. *Claim no precedence on private or interior merits.*

(Qui passera de nous deux? Il a quatre laquais et je n'en ai qu'un. C'est à moi de céder.)

6. *Be neither Sir Oracle nor a buffoon.*

(Je hais le bouffon et l'enflé ! . . . on n'en ferait pas son ami.)

7. *Be sincere.*

(Il faut que l'agréable soit lui même pris du vrai.)

8. *Be generous.*

(Le plaisir des grands est de pouvoir faire des heureux.)

9. *Be staunch, and have the reputation for it.*

(Un vrai ami est chose avantageuse, même pour les plus grands seigneurs.)

"And if you do all this and no more than this" (as Pascal remarked to a young man of quality), "you will certainly lose your life eternal, but at least you will be damned like a gentleman."

VII

Fifteen years after the death of Pascal, the Chevalier de Méré—the Chesterfield of his age—published an anecdote relating a little tour in France which once he took with the Duke of Roannez, some other men of wit and fashion, and also "un grand mathématicien qui n'étoit que cela." The provincial manners and pedantic tastes of this great scholar amused the pleasant gentleman—the stale anecdotes of the old Court, the quotations from Guillaume du Vair—for stoicism and preciosity were already things of yesterday, and the mark of fashion was simplicity and a natural grace. The travellers were too well bred to make sport of their great man; but after a day or two he felt himself the subtle difference: "He began to be diffident and distrustful of his own feelings, and, instead of talking, only listened or asked questions. . . . He had a set of tablets, and now and again he would draw them out,

and make a note. It was extraordinary—before we reached Poitiers, he said nothing that was not excellent!"

The simplicity and delicacy of his new companions ravished Pascal. The world was no longer for him, as for the Jansenists, a place of perdition, but a reunion of charming spirits: a happy Chosen Few, whose conversation reflected the subtlest gradations and finest shades of sentiment: "Since our travels, he thought no more of mathematics, which had been his chief occupation; but that journey caused his abjuration."

Some of the reflections which our mathematician confided to his tablets have probably come down to us in that enchanting *Discours sur les Passions de l'Amour* which Victor Cousin discovered in 1843, and of which M. Emile Faguet offers us a new edition, enriched with a penetrating and witty commentary. There is nothing to prove that the *Discours* is by Pascal—one of the manuscripts bears the simple mention "attribué à M. Pascal"—and M. Victor Giraud is half inclined to attribute it to Méré. But a study of the book itself inclines us to believe in the authorship of Pascal—of a Pascal doubtless influenced by the personality of Méré. The maxims of the *Discours* repeat the themes of the *Pensées*—almost word for word in many instances; they have not yet the depth, the moral grandeur of the *Pensées*, nor the vivacity and fire of the *Provinciales*, but they are preludes to these themes. And the mind of the writer—

romantic, delicate, melancholy, chaste—is, to the mind of Pascal, as the sketch is to the portrait. It is the mind of a man of thirty (whom intellectual interests and fragile health have so far guaranteed against the folly of passion), suddenly overcome, or rather caught up, ravished, in an adoration for Beatrice revealed: "Les grandes âmes ne sont pas celles qui aiment le plus souvent; c'est d'un amour violent que je parle: il faut une inondation de passion pour les ébranler et pour les remplir. Mais quand elles commencent à aimer elles aiment beaucoup mieux."

Is not that the accent of Pascal?

Love, as Pascal conceives it, is a Platonic, an ideal attachment, a sentiment compact of admiration and respect. The influence of Corneille and of the *Précieux* had not yet faded from his heart; the *Discours sur les Passions de l'Amour* is the last faint murmur of *l'amour courtois*. We do not know the name of his Beatrice—not, I imagine, little Charlotte de Roannez, so much younger than himself, to whom he played the part of guide, philosopher and friend. Perhaps, as Rudel loved the Lady of Tripoli, Pascal may have dreamed of Queen Christina in the north? There is something unreal, imaginary, intellectual in his discourse. We think of Jean de Saintré, to whom the Dame des Belles Cousines proposes a devotion to a lady greater, wiser, grander, older than himself, who can satisfy her lover's ambition and enchant his dreaming fancy with her "haulte amitié."

VIII

In so far as he divined them, these social successes of his son must have pleased Etienne Pascal, now retired from office, being near his sixtieth year, and living sometimes in Paris and sometimes in Auvergne. On quitting Rouen in 1648, he had learned with consternation his daughter's determination to take the veil. Angry, offended at once in his tenderness and his authority, he had cut off all intimacy with Port Royal, had carried off son and daughter to Clermont-Ferrand, and there had thrown himself heart and soul into Pascal's experiments. Nothing of all this had influenced Jacqueline. Dressed like an old woman, in her plain black gown which no stay sustained, no ribbon adorned, she spent her days in a chamber like a cell, fireless in winter, lost in an ecstasy of meditation. But the son, at least, the son who should carry on so honourable a name, was reclaimed from such excess of piety.

On the 23rd of September, 1651, Etienne Pascal died. Pascal's father, despite their recent differences, had been father, comrade, friend and master all in one; his death inspired the young philosopher with a letter to Gilberte Périer, which the pious sentiments of Port Royal animate. A *centon* of the sentiments of St. Cyran, this discourse would seem to us strained and artificial but for one beautiful passage—surely the most beautiful that such an

occasion ever has inspired—pure, simple, penetrating, wherein speaks the very soul of Pascal—

"J'ai appris d'un saint homme, dans notre affliction, qu'une des plus solides et plus utiles charités envers les morts est de faire les choses qu'ils nous ordonneroient s'ils étoient encore au monde, et de pratiquer les saints avis qu'ils nous ont donnés, et de nous mettre pour eux en l'état auquel ils nous souhaitent à présent. Par cette pratique nous les faisons revivre en nous en quelque sorte."

Sometimes the dead appear to radiate from the hearts that loved them most—not for ever, but during a year or two, the period of deepest bereavement. And if a man may offer himself as a tabernacle to some dear spirit dispossessed, surely Pascal sheltered for some while the spiritual remnant of his father. He was himself and something added to himself: "Blaise Pascal, Auvergnat, fils d'Etienne Pascal." Not that he gained entirely by this interior hospitality, for sometimes the mourner is nobler than the ghost. The excellent Etienne Pascal, so sound a mathematician, so kind a friend and father, and of late so pious, had been a worldly and ambitious man. And now the son of Etienne Pascal chose the things that Etienne Pascal had preferred, remained aloof from the austere and methodist society of Port Royal, continued his father's opposition to the vows of Jacqueline, went much into society, clattered over the pavements of Paris in his coach and six, played with irascible

amusement at cards and games of chance, and spent some time and anxiety in hiding the mediocrity of his estate. "He determined to follow the way of the world—to take office and to marry." But the state of his health troubled him greatly. It seemed to Pascal that his sister's first duty was to him. Their two little fortunes united would provide a pleasant house, and her dear society was indispensable to him who knew no other nurse or secretary. On the last day of December, 1651, he signed a contract with his sister by which she made over her capital to him, he securing her an annuity at 7½ per cent., which should cease at her death or on the day when she should take the veil. . . . Jacqueline signed, but she did not renounce her intention of entering Port Royal, only she kept silence, dreading the explosion of her brother's grief and anger. A few days later the Périers arrived in Paris, and Jacqueline confided to Gilberte that her flight was prepared for the morrow. . . . That night, Gilberte lay wakeful, thinking of the blow that this would be to her brother, and pitying Jacqueline, summoned by Heaven away from home, thus violently separated for ever from all she loved. At seven, after dawn, hearing no one astir in her sister's little room, Madame Périer arose and quietly opened the door—

"Je crus qu'elle n'avoit point dormy non plus, et j'eus peur qu'elle ne se trouvât mal, de sorte que j'allay à son lit, où je la trouvay fort endormie. Le bruit que je fis l'ayant reveillée . . . elle me dit

qu'elle se portoit bien et qu'elle avoit bien dormy. Ainsi elle se leva, s'habilla et s'en alla, faisant cette action comme toutes les autres, dans une tranquillité et une égalité d'esprit inconcevables. Nous ne nous dismes point adieu, de crainte de nous attendrir, et je me destournay de son passage lorsque je la vis preste à sortir."

IX

And Pascal continued to live the worldly life. But, as in a chill and wintry dawn a ray of unlovely light will wake us from a happy dream, so a cold glare seemed to have fallen across the pleasant places he frequented. All that of late had so entranced him appeared unattractive, artificial. The ray that illumined his room showed all the shabbiness and hitherto unnoticed imperfections, and the light itself seemed dismal, unnatural, unwished for. Sometimes the disenchantment would cease, and Pascal would continue to enjoy the charm of a life congenial to his taste. And, at other moments, a breath of novel freshness, a sense of release and lightness, would stir the internal sources of his soul like the brushing of an unseen wing. And then again he would feel himself caught in the meshes of a vain, empty, frivolous, valueless existence. In the autumn of 1653 the crisis grew acuter. He experienced "un grand mépris du monde . . . un dégoût presque insupportable pour les personnes qui en sont."

And the sense of charity began to stir in Pascal. This refined society that he frequented was strangely indifferent to the miseries of millions whose toil and privation paid the ransom of the Happy Few! . . . If he lost or won at play (and he loved a game);—if his heart beat quicker for some stage-heroine of Corneille's;—if, in some great salon, the give and take of wits satisfied his sharp, fastidious taste;—if, by his own fireside, he loved to linger over the delightful selfishness of some passage in Montaigne; beneath these worldly joys the same dumb craving yearned within,—across these worldly joys there fell, from time to time, the same unlovely ray: "l'illumination du cœur!"

One day, or so at least a nameless witness says (whose story is preserved in the library of the Oratorian Fathers at Clermont), one holiday when he was driving with his friends to some fair or fête at Neuilly, the horses, crossing the bridge, took fright, and rushed to a place where there was no parapet. The leaders were drowned; the persons in the coach had looked Death in the face. . . . And Pascal could not forget that vision of an abyss.

But more than all there weighed with him the influence of Jacqueline. The brother and sister, some eighteen months estranged, had found each other again, and Pascal was a constant visitor at Port Royal. . . . A year before (on Trinity Sunday, 1652) Jacqueline had been enrolled as a novice of Port Royal, and now she was anxious to profess her

ultimate vows. On doing so, it was usual for a nun to pay over her dowry to the convent. But all Jacqueline's fortune was in her brother's hands, and neither Pascal nor his sister Gilberte Périer (excellent Jansenists though they were) wished Jacqueline's money to fall into the coffers of Port Royal. Mère Angélique had then declared her willingness to accept her new daughter tocherless; but Jacqueline wept.

"Why do you weep?" said Mère Angélique. "Or why not weep for all the sins of all the sinners in the world? There are worse sins against God" —for she thought (adds the commentator) of M. Pascal, who, having been touched by grace, had yet returned to the amusements of the world.

And still Jacqueline wept. Then M. Singlin came forward, and said that, unless Jacqueline gave her brother a chance of fulfilling his duty, she would become a partaker in his sin. So the sad sister had written to the brother whom she loved; and when her letter brought him to the convent, when he saw her pale, faintly smiling, in her monastic dress, all his old love had gushed out towards her. His heart melted; he gave up her fortune; he begged her advice and counsel, and looked upon her as his spiritual directress.

And yet he could not bring himself to an open breach with the world, nor make profession of his return to religion. He went to see his sister frequently, but with some secrecy and stealth. The

disconcerted Jacqueline wrote to Gilberte: "He is strangely anxious that no one should know he comes here, save to see me. He says he could easily make the excuse of having business in the country—he would leave his carriage and servants at some village near Port Royal and go the rest of the way on foot. Then, if he gave a false name at the door, no one save M. Singlin need know who he really is."

For Pascal still hesitated between Port Royal and the ambitions of the social, scientific world. But the cold and mystical ray grew steadily more intense, till it became a spot filling the universe—the eye of God—"le point qui remplit tout"—the Infinite.

X

In the midst of these preoccupations, Pascal was greatly engrossed by mathematics. That very Chevalier de Méré who had converted him from abstract science had been the means of attracting him to the calculation of probabilities. The society in which Pascal now chiefly spent his time was fond of play, and he no less than they, for the gaming-table conciliates most of his propensities—the passion for triumph and supremacy, combativeness, the pleasure in society, the sense of skill, the love of gain and adventure; it is a door always open to that "vie tumultueuse" which attracted the half-crippled invalid who could so rarely experience its excite-

ment. For several years Pascal had forsworn the study of mathematics. But now, in 1654, Méré asked him several suggestive questions as to the value of chance: suppose that, in the middle of a game, two antagonists of equal merit leave the table, the one having gained so many tricks, the other so many, how should the stakes be divided? Pascal immediately imagined a quantity of variations on this problem, was soon in active correspondence on the subject with Fermat the mathematician, and gradually found himself engaged in his Treatise on the Arithmetical Triangle.

But to the man who has one constant obsession, all subjects tend to nourish the same fixed idea. There is one ideal combination in which the player may gain immensely, if he gains, and lose, if he loses, next to nothing. Pascal, ill in bed, while writing briskly all these calculations to Fermat, is revolving a parallel problem in his secret soul—

"You must wager (he says to himself) for or against the existence of a God! What do you lose by taking the risk? It is true you must give up sundry pestiferous pleasures, but you shall have dearer delights. What do you lose? You shall be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, beneficent, a friend to your friends. And think of the difference between the *certitude* of what you risk—so little! —and the *incertitude* of your gain—an infinity of life and happiness in glory eternal! With such a hope, even in this world you would be the gainer!"[1]

[1] *Pensée* 233. Brunschvicg, II.

It happened to Pascal as it often happens to men on the threshold of the spiritual world: the paradox, the pleasantry, the curious quip whose quaintness amuses, is proved by some strange chance to have a deeper meaning than we thought, and suddenly appears as the symbol of certitude. This idea of the wager held Pascal captive. And when he returned to his geometry and his arithmetic, behold these studies (secretly informed by his subconscious self) were all full of parables and spiritual lessons! M. Fortunat Strowski, that alert and penetrating critic, has discovered in the *Traités du triangle arithmétique* the first outline of one of the most startling, one of the most grand and moving pages in the *Pensées*. This is the original passage—

"Une grandeur continue d'un certain ordre n'augmente pas si on lui ajoute des quantités d'ordre inférieur, en tel nombre que l'on voudra. Ainsi par exemple une somme de lignes n'augmente pas plus par l'addition d'une somme de points, qu'une somme de surfaces n'augmente par l'addition d'une somme de lignes, ou une somme de solides par l'addition d'une somme de surfaces . . . *en sorte qu'on peut toujours négliger les quantités d'ordre inférieur, à côté des quantités d'ordre plus élevé.*"

Here we are in the region of pure mathematics, but Nature is one. Transport this truth, proven as only mathematical truth can be proved, into the moral world; what does it reveal? Here also there are orders, and the less cannot add to the greater,

so that, in these orders also, it is wise to neglect the less for the greater. . . .

"Tous les corps, les firmaments, les étoiles, la terre et ses royaumes, ne valent pas le moindre des esprits . . . tous les corps ensemble et tous les esprits ensemble et toutes leurs productions, ne valent pas le moindre mouvement de charité. Cela est d'un ordre infiniment plus élevé.

"De tous les corps ensemble, on ne saurait en faire réussir une petite pensée : cela est impossible et d'un autre ordre. De tous les corps et esprits, on n'en saurait tirer un mouvement de vraie charité, cela est impossible et d'un autre ordre, surnaturel."[1]

But these orders are discontinuous; only a miracle can make a genius of the king or turn Archimedes into a saint.

If not the heart, at least the mind of Pascal was converted to religion. The mind of the physicist is singularly sensitive to the apprehension of supernatural realities. He is aware of the conventions and uncertainties of science. Men of the world and men of letters imagine that the knowledge of physicists is based on certitudes, which we ourselves no doubt cannot exactly gauge, yet which may be proved and tested at any moment by the experts of the craft. But a Pascal will contend that religion, though transcending reason, rests on as sure a foundation as any of the sciences. Which of them seems to you the most exact? Geometry? And yet

[1] *Pensée* 793. Brunschvicg, II.

it starts from certain elementary assumptions such as number, time, motion, space, extensity. These, just as much as religion, we apprehend only by a movement of the soul, an intuition. "On trouvera peut-être étrange que la géométrie ne puisse définir aucune des choses qu'elle a pour principal objet—quand elle est arrivée aux premières vérités connues, elle s'arrête là, et demande qu'on les accorde."[1] The natural philosopher, on the other hand, is aware of mysterious forces beyond our ken, invisibly, inaudibly, imperceptibly circulating round us, flooding the secret veins and channels of the universe, as the blood flows in our veins. He feels that a different set of conditions may come into play outside the boundaries of the visible universe. We hardly know our finite world; we apprehend there is an infinite, and its nature is a mystery—"Aussi on peut bien connaître qu'il y a un Dieu sans savoir ce qu'il est."[2]

And, at last, in his mind all the Infinite condensed into a supernatural Person, Jesus Christ, whom he adored.

XI

In the long tract of a life the hours are few indeed when a man awakes, as it were, to that quickened sense, that magnified intelligence, which alone gives a meaning to existence, filling us with interior joy.

[1] *Traité de l'Esprit géometrique.*
[2] *Pensée* 233, loc. cit.

Perhaps no mortal has known many of these moments of spiritual ecstasy or has been able to enjoy them with continuity. A few such instants, rising above the dusty plains of life like snowy, rosy Alpine peaks, are perhaps all that we shall keep of life hereafter, all that we shall recall, if memory and consciousness in any degree survive our mortal state.

Towards the end of 1654 Pascal was more seriously ill than he had been for some years. On the night of St. Clement's Day, the 23rd of November, unable to sleep, he lay reading the Gospel of St. John. Suddenly his eyes dazzled: a flame of fire seemed to envelop him. In the incomparable phrase of the *Imitation*, he was all on fire: *totus ignitus;* and with the psalmist he cried: *In meditatione mea exardescit ignis*: a flame of mysterious, eternal, beneficent fire that inundated flesh and heart and soul with a new sense! Such a moment of marvellous euphoria could never be forgotten nor expressed with mortal words, only with tears, or in such broken fragmentary speech, like sobs, as Pascal found, to record the mystic moment, in that Memorial which thenceforth he ever wore in secret, sewn into his clothes, like a talisman.

"Depuis environ dix heures et demie du soir jusques environ minuit et demi.

Feu.

Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob, non des philosophes et des savants.

Certitude! Certitude—sentiment—vue—joie—paix. . . .

. . . Oubli du monde et de tout hormis Dieu. . . .

. . . Grandeur de l'Âme humaine—

'Père juste, le monde ne t'a point connu, mais je t'ai connu.'

Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie. . . .

. . . .

Je m'en suis séparé!

Que je n'en sois pas séparé éternellement! . . .

Renonciation totale et douce.

Soumission totale à Jesus Christ et à mon directeur. Eternellement en joie pour un jour d'exercice sur la terre.

Non obliviscar sermones tuos. Amen."

Pascal at last had accepted the wager. On the 7th of January, 1655, he entered the precincts of Port Royal des Champs.

XII

Port Royal, the nursery of Racine, the refuge of Pascal, the friend of Bossuet, has left on all its great men the hall-mark of its character—a print of conscience and a stamp of truth—

"Oubli du monde et de tout hormis Dieu.
. . . Grandeur de l'Âme humaine! . . ."

These lines of Pascal might be the motto of Port Royal, and contain the secret of its influence—its extraordinary influence—over the souls of its contemporaries. And we might well wonder at this

exaltation of principle in theologians devoted to necessity and grace, priests of predestination, who hold that the very virtues of those that are called, but not chosen, are merely splendid sins! *Pauciores sunt qui salvantur!* . . . Yet (more than those who preach that man may win salvation by his merits) they insisted on the laws of conscience, on scrupulous truth, on the tense and constant struggle of the human will. It is such contradictions as these that make for greatness! The solitaries of Port Royal, immolating the present and the certain to the rare, bare chance of a reward in eternity, dared heroically their noble adventure and enjoyed their dangerous life.

Laboremus pro incerto! The rashness and difficulty of their undertaking attracted Pascal, who in nothing loved the golden mean. The very ease and felicity of the worldly life satisfied him of its mediocrity. If a man should become the umpire of elegance and the arbiter of honour for all his age, though he spake with the tongue of angels and charmed never so wisely, these gifts and graces would not make him great or grand. And the secret instinct of Pascal was all for greatness, all for grandeur. He had, we know, the *libido dominandi*, the *libido excellendi;* so soon as it became clear to him that the form of life which he had embraced was not the first of all, the best and greatest, he began to crave a nobler, if a thornier, way.[1]

[1] See Petitot, op cit., 55.

And yet he dreaded the privations of Port Royal; he feared for his health; the separation from his friend, de Roannez, seemed like the wrench of body and soul. For some six months he had lingered on the brink. And then, at the New Year, he took the plunge—and enjoyed it! Jacqueline Pascal wrote to Madame Périer—

"Il a obtenu une chambre ou cellule parmi les solitaires de Port Royal d'où il m'a écrit avec une extrême joie de se voir logé et traité en prince—mais en prince au jugement de Saint Bernard, dans un lieu solitaire où l'on fait profession de pratiquer la pauvreté en tout où la discrétion le peut permettre. Il assiste à tout l'office, depuis primes jusqu'à complies, sans qu'il sente la moindre incommodite de se lever à cinq heures du matin; et comme si Dieu voulait qu'il joignît le jeûne à la veille pour braver toutes les règles de la médecine, qui lui ont tant défendu l'un et l'autre—le souper commence à lui faire mal à l'estomac, de sorte que je pense qu'il le quittera."

We must imagine Pascal "gai dans la solitude"—the words are Jacqueline's—"un pénitent réjoui," as she says again, yet trying his strength against the exercises of the ascetic life, meditating the Scriptures by day and by night, assisting at every service in the chapel, pushing the spirit of mortification to its last extreme. A year after his conversion, in December 1655, his sister writes to him, in one of those spirited letters which it would be a sin to translate—

"On m'a fort congratulée pour la grande ferveur qui vous élève si fort au dessus de toutes les manières communes, que vous mettez les balais au rang des meubles superflus! . . ." And she begs him, out of penance, to be for some months "aussi propre que vous êtes sale," and as vigilant in directing his servant as he is negligent of all that regards himself ("Who sweeps a room as to God's praise, makes that and the action fine!") "Et après cela il vous sera glorieux, et édifiant aux autres, de vous voir dans l'ordure—s'il est vrai toutefois qu'il soit le plus glorieux, dont je doute beaucoup—parce que Saint Bernard n'était pas de ce sentiment."

The charming nun makes sport of her great brother's austerities. There was perhaps (before the *Provinciales*) at Port Royal a disposition not to take Pascal quite seriously. He had been converted once before, and had slid back into a worse state than the first; the Jansenists could not forget this relapse. Had not Mère Angélique said of him, when Jacqueline pronounced her vows against his will: "Qu'il n'y avait pas lieu d'attendre un miracle de grâce en une personne comme lui"? Perhaps the very excess of his austerities appeared to them suspicious? Nicole used to smile in after days, and tell how a labourer, working on the land of the convent, had exclaimed one day: "Whenever I see M. Pascal, he looks as if he were just going to swear!" Port Royal did not ask such an extreme. It asked detachment, but a serene detachment; it bade its penitents be poor—use only the most neces-

sary furniture in their chambers; wear the quietest and plainest of garb; live sparely; wait each on himself so far as possible; work each with his own hands at some humble manual labour, were it but for a quarter of an hour morning and evening. Port Royal asked a Quakerish, a Tolstoi-ish, sobriety—but laid no stress on cobwebs, dust or dirt. . . .

To Pascal, as to all persons of a passionate temperament, each crisis in his inner life appeared as something absolutely new—a *vita nova*, a revival and renewal. He rose from the ashes of his past like the phœnix, and shook them from him, even while Port Royal remembered his earlier conversion, and how he had been attracted and led away by science and the world, living "dans les amusements." And now the same crisis, the same struggle, again agitated his unstable soul—a soul that aspired ever to Unity, yet never remained at one with itself; a soul whose different elements were constantly dissociated in a perpetual antagonism.

For a moment, that Unity was realised, and Pascal dwelt happy in his cell, rising before the dawn at four in the morning, strengthening his will by solitude and fasting, stronger than he had been for months. He was full of a tranquil inner joy, a sense of release and lightness that once he had experienced before, which comes from the sudden simplifying of life. In this plain bare place, where the garden showed no flowers, even in summer, where no organ made music in the convent chapel,

where beauty, grace, art were things forsworn, he was borne up by a delicious sense of elasticity and detachment. He had entered the mystical kingdom of Charity.

If Mère Angélique and M. Singlin looked on their new convert with mingled affection and mistrust, the younger men of Port Royal were proud of the adhesion of a great mathematician, a brilliant man of the world, whose mastery of science and knowledge of life were universally admitted. Certainly all of them knew something of the arithmetical machine. Among these younger men—young only in the comparative degree—Pascal was irresistibly attracted to Antoine Arnauld, the great Arnauld, already over forty years of age, a man full of vigour, solid judgment, cheerful spirits and heroic virtue. He was the last born of that family of Arnauld of whom eight brothers and sisters were inmates of Port Royal, twenty years younger than his sister, Mère Angélique, who when she thought of his fortitude and his learning called him "Mon Père," and again, remembering his trials, would say, "Mon pauvre petit frère!" He was the militant theologian of the order, at once great and gay, soldier-like and simple—a man of might and mirth who loved to smite a Jesuit hip and thigh, and then would turn aside to gambol with a little child.

A certain Marquis de Louville in his youth had heard the Jansenists of this great generation fulminate against their enemies: "Ils parlaient

toujours des Jésuites et n'en parlaient jamais sans que la gorge leur enflât." We see the harsh and angry Jansenists, the veins of their throat swollen with passion! Arnauld alone among them all would suddenly break off and join the little fellow in his games.[1] Pascal must have thought of some such trait when he wrote in his *Pensées*—

"On ne s'imagine Platon et Aristote qu' avec de grandes robes de pédants. C'étaient pourtant des gens honnêtes" (or, as we should say, men of the world) "et comme les autres, riant avec leurs amis."[2]

This amiable and simple man lived the life of a hunted fox: "M. Arnauld vit sous terre comme une taupe," wrote Madame de Sévigné. After some violent outburst, when he had lived down his last imprudence (which would always be the affair of some years), he would steal back to Port Royal des Champs and bide there very quietly, till some new outrage on the faith roused him to fresh zeal—and then he must again set out into exile, in secrecy and in silence.

While Pascal was enjoying the society of Arnauld at Port Royal, a certain priest at Saint Sulpice refused the Sacrament to the Duke of Liancourt, on the ground that his opinions, as a known Jansenist, were schismatic and heretical. Arnauld took fire. Two angry letters soon set the Jesuits at his heels.

[1] Sainte-Beuve, *Port Royal*, iii. 156.
[2] *Pensée* 331.

The Sorbonne arraigned him before a tribunal of doctors which met and deliberated during the whole of December 1655 and January 1656. His censure and degradation appeared certain. The Jansenists appealed to the Parliament and were immediately nonsuited. "The Pope, the Sorbonne, the Council, the Parliament, all are against them—they are lost. They have no Court of Appeal!" wrote Fouquet to Mazarin.

And Pascal wrote in his *Pensées:* "Ad tuum tribunal, Jesu, appello!"

At Port Royal, while the suit was pending, the solitaries communed together and decided that it would be well to enlighten the opinion of the public. Because the debates were in Latin, the issues were obscured; and the Jansenists passed with the crowd for no better than Protestants. It would be wise to scatter broadcast some simple statement of the case. Arnauld consented to compose such a pamphlet; but when he read it to the gentlemen of Port Royal their reserve was an evident opinion. Arnauld could only do "the big bow-wow!" He smiled, and, turning to Pascal, he said: "You are young, you should try your hand at it."

And Pascal wrote the first *Provinciale*. Here was Ariel among the prophets! The brilliant nimble beauty of his style, its dazzling genius, were a new gift to him. They came in the hour when he had renounced the world and its works. But we live on our yesterdays. Every line of the *Petites Lettres*

was quick with that "délicieux et criminel usage du monde" which the hermit of Port Royal had for ever forsworn. They were prompted by the man he had been—the reader of Montaigne, the friend of Méré. Our unconscious ego (all that is genius in us, and impulse) decides and acts according to what we used to be, untouched as yet by our immediate self.

Prompt, ardent, Pascal affronts a subject of which he is in fact prodigiously ignorant—theology. He comes to these problems with the fresh mind and lucid attentiveness of the inventor—studying the vexed questions of grace, predestination and free-will as he studied the vacuum in his test tubes or the equilibrium of liquids. Here, too, he will begin by verifying his facts by the light of experience and common sense, always seeking the simplest explanation. Here, too, he will start from an hypothesis whose only proof can lie in the exactness of its previsions and the constant invariability of its consequences. Success is the test of science. With Pascal, morality became the criterium of religion.

And always he works on the same method—

First of all an inkling, an intuition, a movement that his imagination prompts; and he follows it up in a rush, with haste, fury, precipitation, to its extreme consequence, careless of incidental inaccuracies. But afterwards he goes over the same ground, painfully, laboriously, exactly;—verifying and measuring, until suddenly he flags, with a brusque droop of the wing, and quits his subject unfinished. The work

of Pascal is a collection of marvellous fragments. Creative genius admits this imperfection in its treasure-trove.

As for the material, here as there, he will take it in other men's inventions, or in other men's books —wherever he discovers the elements that he alone combines. He will take the form of his dialogues from the *Constance* of Du Vair. As for the matter, that will be supplied by—not Torricelli, this time, not Montaigne—but the great Arnauld. When M. Brunschvicg's edition of Pascal shall be terminated we shall know—as already, thanks to M. Strowski, we foresee—to what an unsupposed extent Pascal worked on Arnauld's notes: "toutes les *Provinciales* (à part ce qui est pris à Escobar) sont faites avec des notes prises sur les écrits inédits ou imprimés d'Arnauld. . . . Pascal l'á compilé, copié, imité mille fois. . . . Le style, la disposition, le sentiment, sont de Pascal; le fond est d'Arnauld."

The genius of Pascal could not save his friend. On January 31, 1656, the great Arnauld was condemned. The day the censure was pronounced upon him, he was walking in a gallery at Port Royal when the words of St. Augustine rose into his mind, and he murmured, "Since they persecute, O Lord, Thy Truth in me, help me to fight for Thy Truth until the death!" He took this inner movement as an admonition and went immediately into hiding, and did well, for otherwise he scarcely had avoided the Bastille. In hiding Antoine Arnauld was to

remain for years, yet in constant communication with Port Royal and with Pascal. In March 1656 the solitaries of Port Royal were dispersed. Pascal came to Paris—first of all to a friend's house, near the Luxembourg, opposite the Porte St. Michel. But soon, for greater surety, he moved incognito to a little inn opposite the Collège de France, in the Rue des Poirées, at the sign of King David. Here he took up his abode under the name of M. de Mons, and continued with all possible speed and secrecy to write the second, third and fourth of the *Lettres Provinciales*.

Let us note here Pascal's growing passion for disguises. The first of the *Petites Lettres* had appeared anonymously, but soon they were signed by *Louis de Montalte*. "Montalte" (which Sainte-Beuve supposes a variation on "Montaigne") is, of course, the Puy de Dome, that high mountain of his birthplace which had served Pascal for his great experiment—that Olympus of the Auvergnat which the little world of Port Royal (filled with Auvergnats) would recognise at once, while the name meant nothing to the uninformed ear. "M. de Mons" is the same as "M. de Montalte," and, later on, the names of "Amos Dettonville" and "Salomon de Tultie" are anagrams of "Louis de Montalte," and homages in mufti to his native place.

Pascal, in retreat, spent several busy months at the sign of King David. Meanwhile, his brother-in-law, Florin Périer, arriving in Paris, took up his

quarters in the same hostelry, and there received the visit of a distant cousin, a Jesuit, the Père de Frétat, who warned him that, in the Society, the authorship of the *Provinciales* was attributed to M. Pascal. "M. Périer répondit comme il put." Behind the half-drawn curtains, on the bed, a score of numbers of the *Provinciales* were laid out to dry! As soon as the Jesuit had left the room, M. Périer hastened to tell the good story to Pascal, who lodged in the chamber immediately overhead; and the two Jansenists, behind their bolted doors, had a hearty laugh.

The success of the *Lettres Provinciales* was instantaneous and immense. The wit, the fire, the pungent comic sense (forestalling Molière) of the first letters; the moral ardour, the grand indignation of the later ones, took Paris by surprise. The Jesuits never wholly recovered from this double assault; it was as though an elf and an angel had joined arms against them, and Pascal was both the elf and the angel! A Jesuit once compared the *Provincial Letters* to the torments that savages inflict on evangelising martyrs, when, having smeared their helpless nakedness with honey, they expose them to the stings of wasps and hornets!

The *Provinciales*, in fact, are full of stings and honey. And Pascal forgot too consistently that these Jesuits, whom he hated as debasers of the moral currency, were also, courageously, evangelising martyrs. He forgot the missionaries of China

and Paraguay. He misquoted, he dramatised—he caricatured. But Pascal was not yet a saint. And he was always a genius, a polemist, and a Celt.

Every one read the *Letters*. "We have only ten thousand printed, and we shall need many more," wrote one of the gentlemen of Port Royal after the seventeenth. Yet, when the first enthusiasm and triumph had subsided, a lassitude, a melancholy, overcast the mind of Pascal. Gradually the spirit of Port Royal was penetrating the soul of the secretary of Port Royal. Mère Angélique had not murmured in vain her customary counsels: "douceur . . . retenue . . . sagesse." Had she not written in the full joy of combat—"le silence en ce temps serait encore plus beau"? Perhaps, too, the mind of Pascal, which was after all a scientific mind, reproached him with advancing too audaciously opinions which he had gathered at second-hand, and as to which he had no personal experience and knowledge. Perhaps the soul of Pascal—henceforth upon its guard against the *libido excellendi*—saw in the artist's triumph a snare, and forestalled already the future blame of Racine: "Et vous semble-t-il que les *Lettres Provinciales* soient autre chose que des comédies?" Or was he simply weary of success? After the eighteenth *Provinciale* the pen dropped from his hand. The nineteenth, the twentieth, commenced, announced, were never written.

XIII

Pascal's aim, in writing the *Provinciales*, had been to awaken the conscience of France, drugged by the sophisms of Jesuit morality, and also to instruct the public in the nature of positive truth—to show the world "quelle est la nature des choses de fait et par quel principe on en doit juger."[1] Though Pope and Council should assert the heresy of Jansenism—basing it on five propositions supposed to exist in the *Augustinus*—yet, if in fact these propositions do *not* exist in the *Augustinus*, then Pope and Council have anathematised in vain. Authority is as nothing in the face of fact; and Pascal says to the Jesuits—

"Ce fut en vain que vous obtîntes contre Galilée un décret de Rome, qui condamnait son opinion touchant le mouvement de la terre. Ce ne sera pas cela qui prouvera qu'elle demeure en repos; et, si l'on avait des observations constantes qui prouvassent que c'est elle qui tourne, tous les hommes ensemble ne l'empêcheraient pas de tourner, et ne s'empêcheraient pas de tourner aussi avec elle."[2]

But there are facts which surpass the known order of Nature; the positive philosophy of Pascal in nowise excluded mysticism; he was continually haunted by the sense of a constant, if imperfect,

[1] Lettre XVIII. [2] *Ibid.*

communication with a sphere just beyond the grasp of our intelligence, just outside the testimony of our senses. "There is," said Pascal, in one of his letters, "a Voice that sets at naught the laws of Nature." To say that things cannot happen which transcend our present conception of the order of the universe appeared to him a piece of Jesuitry, a sophism, a paring and clipping of divine truth to make it fit in a frame of our invention, formed in the poor capacity of mortal minds.

There is an invisible continuity uniting all the figures of this world beyond our finite measures of space and time. And, sometimes, out of this dim Infinite, a message comes to us: a message sent—not by a mere World-soul—not by the "Dieu des philosophes et des savants"—but by a spirit of Love, a God of Consolation and of Conduct.

In the spring of 1656 such a message, such a fact, dropped into the consciousness of Pascal, sending through all his soul wider echoes and ever wider eddies of feeling and of prayer. Even the night of his conversion had encompassed him with no more marvellous sense of the presence and reality of the Godhead than the so-called miracle of the Holy Thorn.

"S'il y a des miracles, il y a donc quelque chose au-dessus de ce que nous appelons la Nature!"

On the 27th of March a little girl at school in the Convent of Port Royal des Champs, Pascal's young

niece Margot, the daughter of Florin and Gilberte Périer, was suddenly cured of a long-standing ulcer of the lachrymal gland, by the contact of a relic of the Crown of Thorns. The miracles of Lourdes have familiarised us with such cases (which modern Faith, and modern Thought, and modern Science explain with various dexterity). To Pascal, as to all his world, there was but one explanation : in Pascal's eyes the Thorns of Jesus worked a miracle in the Chapel of Port Royal *as a sign*, in order to distinguish between the false and the true, between the calumniated and the calumniators. The Court, the Pope, the Jesuits, the Parliament had persecuted the nuns of Port Royal. The "Voice that sets at naught the laws of Nature" spoke and proclaimed their innocence: "Miracles discern doctrine, and doctrine discerns miracles!" The Catholic Church was at that moment in a mist of perplexity. Port Royal drew the more ardent spirits by the purity of its life, the austerity of its teaching, the gifts and grandeur of its apostles; but Rome had condemned the essential tenets of Port Royal. On the other hand, the Jesuits were a numerous and eloquent body of religious men; they agreed with the University, they were approved at Rome. Although their road appeared the primrose path itself compared to the strait gate and the narrow way of the Jansenists, yet it was they, not these, whom sacred doctors and profane alike recommended. And at this point God spoke!

"Lorsqu'il y aura contestation dans la même Eglise, le miracle décidera. . . .[1]

"Lequel est le plus clair?

"Cette maison n'est pas de Dieu; car on n'y croit pas que les cinq propositions soient dans Jansenius;

Ou bien,

"Cette maison est de Dieu; car Il y fait d'étranges miracles."[2]

Think as we will of the reasoning of Pascal, he understood his age. Rome and the University gave pause; the heart of the Queen was changed; the persecution for a moment ceased; the so-called miracle of the Holy Thorn did more for Port Royal than all the genius of Pascal.

The mind of Pascal appears to have progressed by crooked and curved lines from the great experiment of the Puy de Dôme to the miracle of the Holy Thorn. Sainte-Beuve admits himself nonplussed, disconcerted by this attitude of his hero. And yet, in either case Pascal's method and mental position were the same! Here as there he was all for fact, however new, unexplained and startling, in place of the comfortable humdrum theories of the schools: "Nature abhors a vacuum," "The supernatural does not happen." In the eyes of Pascal, the miracle of the Holy Thorn was a fact! He knew Margot Périer; she was his own niece and his god-daughter; for years he had grieved over the ulcer of her eye.

[1] *Pensée* 832. [2] *Pensée* 834.

The contact of the Holy Thorn apparently had cured it. Let us not limit Truth (he would say) by our preconceived ideas. We affect to found our conduct and philosophy on Truth; yet, even in the things of this world, our reason is incapable of grasping its unfamiliarity. Reason may command the abstract truth of mathematics, which is sterile in its depth and useless in its purity; but, in proportion as we advance towards the contact of the Real, the importance of our reason diminishes. In a science such as physics—in a crucial test like that of the vacuum—reason must submit to experiment. In the practical conduct of life, instinct and feeling are superior to reason. But the things of Faith owe nothing at all to the mechanism of our reason. They are without, above; they have another origin, are of a different order. Religion, like science, is an overthrow, an upsetting of all our preconceived ideas, a perpetual astonishment, a mockery of reason.

XIV

In 1657 the mysterious Louis de Montalte ceased to produce his *Letters*. And Pascal, in one of his sudden and extreme resolutions, announced his intention of writing an *Apology for Christianity*.

We may wonder that a Jansenist should seek to be a missionary! In his eyes, salvation is the free,

the capricious, gift of Heaven. Mère Angélique at least was clear on this point when she murmured: "Tous les princes du monde ne sauraient faire lever le soleil une heure plus tôt; toute l'éloquence qu'on se peut imaginer ne saurait faire voir la vérité à une personne qui n'est pas encore éclairée par Dieu." A true conversion (Mère Angélique would say) is the irresistible working of interior grace. Had Pascal forgotten the night of Joy and Fire? . . . To men of genius their own emotions and experiences become a sort of artistic masterpieces which, when they reach their hour of perfection, drop off from their lives, like a fruit from the tree, making room for new developments. Had the Jansenism of Pascal come to its maturity in the *Provinciales?* The mind of Pascal suffered again a mysterious crisis and catastrophe, and he stood among the fragments and ruins of his work, suddenly called away from the task he had pursued with so much passion. And the pen of the *Provinciales* dropped from his grasp.

A new ideal called him—the greatest a religious man can conceive. He felt himself destined to rescue immortal souls for the life eternal. He gave, at Port Royal, a lecture, lasting from two to three hours, an outburst of marvellous eloquence—("toute l'éloquence qu'on se peut imaginer")—which was a scheme or project of his *Apology*.

By comparing the notes of the lecture with the fragments of the *Pensées* we may divine that, like

the *Provinciales*, the *Apology* would have begun with a series of brilliant dialogues, gradually rising to the sublimest heights of sustained eloquence. There would have been a Free-thinker—a man like the Chevalier de Méré: one of those cultivated *libertins* so frequent at the Court of the young Louis XIV—a reader of Montaigne, a man of the world, an "honnête homme." And he would have met, no doubt, some disciple of Du Vair and Epictetus—a man of much conscience but of little faith. And these would have come in contact with a Christian, a Jansenist—with Pascal. Parts of their objections, portions of his persuasion, remain —dilapidated, ruined—in the *Pensées;* and (as ruins are sometimes more moving than any finished structure) they form a marvellous debate. An interior desolation, an internal consolation, combine in an antiphony so moving, so grand, so deep, so simple, that it is, to him who reads, as the voice of an inmost soul. The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the *Imitation of Christ* are not more sincere than these exact and fiery fragments. . . .

And yet (oh marvel!) the *Pensées* are composed in great part with the thoughts and sometimes with the very phrases of the free-thinking Montaigne! Even as the *Provinciales* are, in brief, a *résumé* of Arnauld, so the *Pensées* are a concentration and a paraphrase of the *Essais*. The genius of Pascal (perhaps all genius) appears to consist less in invention than in a happy gift of combination: some

other man invents, let us say, the number Two; while another, quite different person, hits on the same discovery; but the genius puts them together and announces Four! As we express our thoughts, however intimate and particular, in everybody's words, taken from the common stock, so he delivers his soul in a new language, formed of ready-made ideas, which he collects and combines with such force and vivacity that a new conception breaks out from their assemblage. . . . "Ce n'est pas dans Montaigne," said Pascal, "mais dans moi que je trouve tout ce que j'y vois." He borrows from Montaigne in order to convert Montaigne.

In this internal argument, the romantic nineteenth century saw the dialogue of doubt and faith in the soul of Pascal—*l'angoisse de Pascal!* But his impassioned, violent and anxious soul never doubted. The questions, the scruples, the scepticism belong to his antagonist, that dear friend Méré (for Pascal, ever concrete and positive, incarnates the soul to be saved in a beloved person); they are subordinated to the purpose of the work. The *Pensées* are like the stars in the sky, so grand, so brilliant; they are beings of distant flame, apparently disconnected, sprinkled solitary through space; yet these, like those, obey with fixed precision a hidden law. . . . Pascal uses all the arguments of Montaigne (or Méré) to establish the vanity of human reason, its disproportion and incapacity to contain the Infinite. And then he advances an argument of Raimond of Sebunda to

show that, inadequate as our mind may be to grasp ultimate truth, it is excellent as a practical instrument to be used for our benefit and profit. Truth, in so far as we may attain to it, is that which our intelligence is compelled, by heredity or experience, to approve as a basis for conduct; and the purpose of thinking is to develop beliefs which shall ensure our happiness in life and in death. Let us use our reason therefore for that which it is apt to secure—our advantage. . . . Is not the chance of eternal beatitude an advantage? Let us risk to-day against the hazard of eternity. And Pascal cries to that gamester, Méré: "Il faut travailler pour l'incertain!"—sacrifice one's life for the chance of so infinite a stake. Then, bringing forward the argument of the wager, he plans the centre and crux of the *Pensées:* There is a truth beyond the truth *qui n'est que vrai!*

This Truth, which is Charity, is not only beyond reason: it is incompatible with reason—of another order, infinitely vaster, in violent contrast to the natural order—"un renversement continuel du pour au contre." It is the bursting into our lives of a factor absolutely new, with a flash and a thunderclap, with an upheaval and downthrow of our landmarks and our altars. Caught up in the grip of a new mysterious power, we burn what we adored, and that which we adored we cast to the burning.

Such, in the eyes of Pascal, is the working of grace. . . . The whole width of Heaven separates such a conception from the religion of a Fénelon!

God, in the sight of Pascal, is a force from without that ravishes with violence, like a thief in the night, that takes up few, indeed, in the chariot of His fire, leaving to night and destruction the majority of even virtuous men—for Grace is rare as Beauty or Genius is rare.

And Fénelon feels that God is everywhere, implanted in every soul at birth, fostered secretly, silently, insensibly, even where His operations are unshown; the underground river feeding all the springs of life.

Vere tu es Deus absconditus! Mysterious text that accords in harmony the two divergent Mystics: Pascal and Fénelon each adore the hidden God. "Toute religion qui ne dit pas que Dieu est caché n'est pas véritable" (*Pensée* 585). But, to Pascal, this hidden, this uncertain Deity is no mere Sum and Soul of the Universe. . . . Pascal is the least pantheistic of thinkers. Though none, like this mathematician, has described the attraction of the Infinite, and the mysterious abyss of the planet-sprinkled sky, yet he never lets those vague depths absorb his worship; and he might say, like Job: "I have seen the moon advance in her majesty, and I have not bowed the knee!"

For, let him repeat, there is a truth beyond the truth "qui n'est que vrai." There is the instinct of the heart: "les raisons du cœur que la raison ne connaît pas." By an illumination of the heart we may feel that God is a Person, we may know that

His personality excludes our own. So that in order to attain a conception of His Divinity we must renounce ourselves. God is to be approached, not by reason, but by charity and self-denial.

Pascal did not pretend to prove the truth of religion by a geometrical demonstration. To move the will, to touch the feelings, was his aim, and all that he thought needful for his end. He cared little for a merely intellectual conviction: "Quand un homme serait persuadé que les proportions des nombres sont des vérités immatérielles, éternelles, et dépendantes d'une première vérité en qui elles subsistent et qu'on appelle Dieu—je ne le trouverais pas beaucoup avancé pour son salut."[1]

These thoughts, these scattered notes, were written, criss-cross, anyhow, with inconceivable abbreviations and allusiveness, on scraps of paper, backs of letters, sometimes in Pascal's own handwriting, sometimes in that of his sister Gilberte, while others are dictated to a friend, even to a child, or taken down by an illiterate person, with mistakes in spelling and traces of the pronunciation of Auvergne—"chanchelier," for instance, instead of "chancelier." Piteous indications of dire physical weakness! When Pascal composed his masterpiece—perhaps the chief masterpiece of French thought and French prose—he was no longer in a condition to white it down For four long years he lingered in a state of nervous prostation, often exhibiting

[1] Préface de *Port Royal.*

the features of an hysterical paresia—"une espèce d'anéantissement et d'abattement général de toutes ses forces," wrote his friend Carcavi, in April 1659. He hoped to emerge again, as he had emerged before, and meanwhile, with pain and difficulty, accumulated his materials, jotting down such stray thoughts or expressions as came into his mind—sometimes the faintest clue (as, for instance, "talon bien tourné"), yet sufficient to lead in the labyrinth.

They are the materials for the *Apologia*, but they are not only the materials for the *Apologia;* many of the *Pensées* are of an earlier date. Some while after his nervous illness of 1647, Pascal, finding his memory less trustworthy, appears to have begun to note his thoughts as they came. The earliest are parallel with his great experiment. Then come those on the spirit of geometry and the intuitive sense, which rhyme, as it were, to the aphorisms in the *Discours sur les Passions de l'Amour;* while the *Pensées* on the Three Orders owe their origin to the *Traités sur le Triangle Arithmétique.* The Holy Thorn is responsible for many: it sent long echoes down the memory of Pascal, it was one of his last great preoccupations; with the experiment of the Puy de Dôme, and the night of his conversion, it was one of the three principal events of his moral life. . . . Chiefly written between 1653 and 1661, the *Pensées* form a sort of intimate journal, a private record of Pascal's intellectual activity—

perhaps the most direct and the most sincere that any man has ever left in writing.

XV

Pascal's genius had ever been of the fitful, involuntary, unconscious sort, that does not depend upon attention or application, which appears as characteristic of mathematical discovery as of the inventions of lyric poetry. Our great contemporary, Henri Poincaré, has told us that all his own discoveries have been made in moments of absent-mindedness suddenly traversed by a flash of automatic insight.[1] No vigour of reason, no effort of logic, accompanied these marvellous combinations. They, no less than the poet's frenzy, were the triumph of sensibility and imagination.

And, doubtless, these rare moments were the recompense of many previous vigils, half forgotten; vigils which had appeared as fruitless as they were arduous, when conscious effort had appeared to toil in vain; vigils which had seemed so useless that often the weary mind had thrown down its burden, abandoned its quest, gone off on some other easier track, completely distracted from its hopeless search. . . . But something in the mind, subliminal, worked quietly on, completing the data,

[1] Henri Poincaré, "L'Invention Mathématique," *Revue du Mois*, September 1908.

collecting the evidence, arranging a secret precious hoard till the great moment came, when one brusque sublime magnesium-flash showed all the wealth arrayed at its disposal—an unsuspected Tom Tiddler's ground—a store of hidden treasure. And the Self that we call *I* had but to choose and to combine.

This sudden, brilliant flashing of a torch across the deep recesses of the spirit had more than once illuminated the labours of Pascal, generally in periods of ill-health.

About the time that he was first occupied with his *Apology*, he spent one livelong night in the tortures of a neuralgic headache. Suddenly, without any conscious preoccupation, the answer to the geometrical problem of the cycloid rushed into his mind and filled it; one thought succeeded another without effort: "elles luy descouvrirent *comme malgré luy* la démonstration de la roulette dont il fut luy mesme surpris! . . . il *la trouva sans y penser*," wrote Madame Périer in her life of her brother.

On the morrow he told the circumstance to the Duke of Roannez, who easily persuaded him to publish his discovery, arguing that this scientific triumph would augment Pascal's authority in the eyes of those whom he hoped to convert. The manner of making this demonstration known is rich of the Old Adam, of the Natural Pascal, freakish, fond of disguises, fond of prestige, of fascination,

subtlety and sway! He offered a prize—a purse of money—and challenged the mathematicians of the world to throw light on the geometrical properties of the cycloid—(the curve described by a point in the circumstance of a rolling wheel)—offering it, not in his own name, but in that of one Amos Dettonville—the word is an anagram of Louis de Montalte. The exercises were to reach Pascal's friend, Carcavi, between June and October 1658. Huygens, the youthful Christopher Wren, John Wallis, several others, sent in approximate solutions. Then Pascal published his own discovery and took the prize.

In this affair of the cycloid Pascal's mind appears to have been working simultaneously on two levels: elaborating the *Apology*, discovering the geometrical properties of the cycloid. And, in the last years of his life, this double development of his complicated personality appears to have affected his religious experience. There is a grave debate among the more recent biographers of Pascal—the argument is as to a Third Conversion: did Pascal die a Jansenist, or was he absolutely reconciled to the regular Church? Relying on his discovery of the manuscript memoirs of Pascal's last confessor, M. Ernest Jovy would have us believe that the great Jansenist withdrew from the heretical outposts of Port Royal, and died completely at one with Rome; while the Abbé Brémond and Father Petitot see him as on the very brink of schism, saved by an

early death from open revolt against the Vatican. And for my part I believe the inner life of Pascal to have been cleft in twain—his will, his activity, his passions remained Jansenist to the verge of heresy; his spiritual and contemplative self was gradually evolving in the sense of orthodox Catholicism.

In his active and theological life Pascal was never more passionately revolutionary than during his last year on earth; but his mystical life (that unconscious, that subliminal self) was winning free of the iron bonds and dogmas of Jansenism; there are passages in the *Pensées* that contradict the Calvinistic tenets of Port Royal; and almost certainly, had Pascal lived, the sudden flashing of the inner torch would have inaugurated a new phase of his spiritual development. But, like his works, the life of Pascal was a fragment—a miraculous fragment.

XVI

On the 7th of March, 1659, Ismaël Bouilliau wrote to Huygens: "Monsieur Pascal s'est confiné je ne sais où dans un phrontistère de Jansénistes que j'ignore encore;" and on the 13th of June the same correspondent signified to Leopold dei Medici that the French savant was utterly exhausted by the geometrical demonstrations of the *Inventions de Amos Dettonville.* Carcavi, in August, writes to Huygens, that the extreme weakness and prostration of Pascal's malady are still excessive.

"Il se porte néantmoins mieux depuis quelques jours qu'il est allé prendre l'air de la campagne, et nous espérons le voir retabli dans sa première santé, mais il lui faut encore du temps." But, a month later, another of Huygens's correspondents gives a very poor account of the invalid's progress, and it is only in July 1660 that Du Gast is able to reassure the Dutch astronomer: "M. Pascal se porte notablement mieux qu'il ne le faisait, selon ce que m'écrit son beau-frère qui est avec lui à Clermont en Auvergne."[1]

The newly discovered Memoirs of Father Beurrier (Pascal's parish priest in Paris, when he lodged in his sister's house) throw a new light on this period of absence from the capital.[2] It was not health alone that sent him to the country, but a spiritual retreat, a change of life, a remorse, doubtless, for his return to the curiosities of science, as well as a withdrawal from the arena of religious debate—from "les questions si difficiles de la grâce et de la prédestination"—in order to muse upon his latter end, and to set down such thoughts as might bring unbelievers to the fold.

"He made a second retreat,[2] more perfect than the first, some two years before his death, God willing thereby to dispose him towards the precious death of saints; for he spent several weeks in great exercises of the soul, in penitence, mortifica-

[1] See Strowski, vol. iii. 338.
[2] See Ernest Jovy, *Pascal inédit*, vol. ii.

tion, silence and self-examination: passing all his previous life in strict review. Whereafter he made a general confession of his sins; and gave great alms, selling his coach, his horses, the hangings from his walls, his handsome furniture, his silver plate, and even the books in his library, saving only the Bible, Saint Augustine, and a very few other volumes. And he gave all the money to the poor. And he sent away his servants, and took up his lodging and boarded with his sister, Mademoiselle Périer,[1] in order to be no more troubled with the care of a household—I know this, for she told me so herself. And he founded the order of his life on the rules of the Gospel, which are to renounce oneself, and all pleasure, and all superfluity."

This mystic retreat was a conversion less, perhaps, to or from Jansenism than to the imitation of Christ. It is at this date, probably, that we must place the beautiful *Mystère de Jésus*, one of those "grands exercices spirituels" that occupied Pascal in his retreat. It is strange to reflect that these few pages—the very soul and essence of Christianity, the spontaneous breath of prayer—were written, in all probability, in obedience to the order of a director! It was the custom of Port Royal for the superior to send every month a subject for meditation, or "mystery," to her penitents and solitaries. Such was the origin of that "écrit de Jacqueline Pascal sur le

[1] Until the middle of the 18th century the ladies of the middle class were styled not Madame but Mademoiselle.

mystère de la mort de N. S. Jésus Christ" which she had composed in 1651; and now, ten years later, she herself, perhaps, may have proposed the same subject to her brother! With what a strong and soaring sweep of wing Pascal rises to this elevation! All the Infinite made man, and that man Christ Jesus! Infinitely pitiful and Infinitely wounded, flooding with His miraculous charity the soul that has emptied itself of earthly lusts and cares! Divine colloquy, in which the wounded Christ consoles the suffering mortal, "Les médecins ne te guériront pas, car tu mourras á la fin, mais c'est moi qui guéris et rends le corps immortel!"

"I am more thy Friend than A. or N. (than Arnauld or than Nicole!). I have done more for thee than they, and they would not suffer at thy hands what I endure. . . .

"I love thee more than thou hast loved thy stains and blotches—thy vanities and curiosities. . . .

"I am thy Guide, since thine earthly guide cannot lead thee. Perhaps I come to thee in answer to his prayer, and thus, invisible, he leads thee still. Be not disquieted.

"Console-toi, tu ne me chercherais pas, si tu ne m'avais pas trouvé.

"Je pensais à toi dans mon agonie. J'ai versé telles gouttes de mon sang pour toi.

"C'est mon affaire que ta conversion. . . .[1]

"Ne t'inquiètes pas!"

[1] *Pensée* 553. Brunschvicg, vol. ii.

XVII

In reading M. Beurrier's *Mémoires*—still more in reading Madame Périer's *Life*—we grow sometimes impatient. We feel so grievously the nervous tension, the irritable weakness of this great sorrowful Pascal, dying in self-imposed discomfort—waiting on himself with faltering steps, banishing his curtains and carpets as unnecessary, and then suffering the torments of neuralgia in his draughty room. We hate the spiked girdle that he wore beneath his dress, and used to stab against his emaciated side to punish some movement of anger or ambition. Our heart goes out to the mothering sister who half admires and half deplores her brother's grim austerity. But the life of the ascetic is not merely a life of renunciation—its aim is not privation, but victory, but achievement. Let us not forget that ἀσκητής means an athlete—one who has *exercised* himself and grown strong. It means one who, knowing the narrow capacity of the human soul, has emptied his pilgrim-bottle of the red wine of our hillsides in order to fill it with a diviner elixir. A nature as rich, as various, as heterogeneous as that of Pascal may feel an instinctive desire for such a discipline. Nor need we suppose that the course of the ascetic was peculiarly grievous to Pascal. He had liked things handsome about him from a fastidious nobility of taste, an aristocratic turn of mind; but he was no sensualist, nor even (as a poet or artist

may be) delicately alive to the purer external pleasures. Not a line in his writing shows any sensitiveness to colour, perfume, music, landscape; his mind was occupied with other, rarer, wholly abstract delights: the sense of infinity, of continuity, of capacity and proportion. Such a man is not the slave of pleasure and of pain. Indeed, in privation, he may taste a keen exquisite charm, in spite of its pricks and stings—all the more exquisite for its pricks and stings: the sense of detachment, of liberation, of *rising superior.* Perhaps the fundamental reality of Pascal's character was this instinct, this need of dominance, of rising superior. And this could be satisfied by the cruel exercise of the ascetic.

From whatsoever reason men embrace it, the ascetic life has often one extraordinary consequence—so frequent that we may almost assimilate it to a law: the ascetic is charitable. All that he takes, first from himself, then from his household and family—all this love and cherishing of which he deprives himself, and them, he finds himself endowed with, immensely multiplied, to lavish on his neighbour, his innumerable anonymous neighbour. The ascetic is the one man who really feels the identity of all human souls, the man to whom *I* and *They* have mysteriously become the same pronoun. Yes, in his grammar, *I* and *Thou* are abolished, that *They* may exist alone and sovereignly. Pascal repulsed the fond anxiety of Gilberte. But

did not a greater than Pascal cry to a tenderer mother: Woman, what is there in common between thee and me? . . . He had certainly upon his shelf the life of Saint Theresa, translated by Arnauld d'Andilly of Port Royal. He must have read in it, as a guide to conduct, the example of the saint and of her sister—

"Une occasion importante m'ayant obligée d'aller chez ma sœur, quoy que je l'eusse aimée auparavant et qu'elle fust meilleure que moy, je demeurois seule le plus que je pouvois, parce que les différences de nos conditions—elle estant mariée et moy religieuse—ne pouvait nous fournir une matière agréable d'entretien. Je sentis néanmoins que ses peines me touchoient davantage que n' auroient fait celles d'une autre personne qui ne m' auroient pas esté si proche; et je connus par là que je n'estois pas si détachée que je le croyois, mais que j'avois encore besoin de fuir les occasions—"

The rebuffs that Pascal inflicted on Gilberte were homages to her power over his soul, that soul which he wished entirely to devote to the love of Heaven and the service of the poor.

The desire of perfection, the ardent love of God, did not exclude, even in this new saintly Pascal, the practical sense of life and human interests. For years he had been frequently crippled by a nervous numbness in his limbs, and the chief pleasure of his worldly days had been the swift coach-and-six which had rushed to obey the orders of his impetuous spirit. Pascal had loved a coach. And the poor

can never ride in a coach, though halt or maimed, though pressed for time, though baffled by wind and struck by storms of hail. All that he cared no longer to bestow upon himself, the ascetic (in obedience to that law of which we spoke) now longed to lavish on the poor and needy. So Pascal invented the omnibus, the "carrosse à cinq sols," and formed his project into a company, established by Royal Letters Patent. A charming letter of Gilberte Périer to M. de Pomponne describes the triumphant progress of the first seven omnibuses set in circulation, on Saturday, March 18, 1662, at seven o'clock in the morning.

Pascal always appreciated the power of money, and we may be sure (as M. Strowski cannily remarks) that he did not disdain the profits of the Omnibus Company; but it was no longer that he might cut a respectable figure among the dukes, and hide his lack of fortune, that he grasped his gains. It was to pour them (as the Magdalene poured her tears and her ointments) into those wounds on the mystical body of our Lord—the sufferings of the poor. He showed himself eager to snatch his dividends—that was the old Adam in him; but he wished to send them entirely to the victims of the floods of Blois. "J'aime la pauvreté parce qu'Il l'a aimée. J'aime les biens, parce qu'ils donnent les moyens d'en assister les misérables"—and one of the manuscripts of the *Pensées* bears at this place the mark of an addition: "J'aime tous les hommes

comme mes frères parce qu'ils sont tous rachetés." "Tous rachetés"? All of them redeemed? . . . Was not the doctrine of Jansenius that Christ did not die for all mankind, but only for the Elect? The love of the poor was widening, melting the dying heart of Pascal, and loosening the bands that bound it in the dogmas of Port Royal.

XVIII

And yet Pascal had never been more ardently and combatively Jansenist! Strange contradiction of his multiple soul! The persecution against Port Royal had broken out afresh and aroused all the chivalry, all the love of battle and *amor dominandi*, that formed so large a part of Pascal's nature. As he wrote about this time to a friend at Clermont—

"Le désir de vaincre est si naturel que, quand il se couvre du désir de faire triompher la vérité, on prend souvent l'un pour l'autre; et on croit rechercher la gloire de Dieu en cherchant en effet la sienne." [1]

When the trouble began, Jacqueline Pascal was under-prioress and mistress of the novices at Port Royal des Champs. The heart of the Queen had been touched by the so-called miracle of the Holy Thorn; but now there was a youthful King to contend with, an absolute young monarch enamoured of unity, who besought the Assembly of Clergy to put a speedy end to the persistent irregularities of

[1] Brunschvicg, vol. ii. p. 451 note.

Port Royal. The truce was ended. The nuns had been left in peace; the solitaries one by one had crept back to their desert. Yet, since the Bull of Alexander VII had been promulgated in France, in March 1657, the storm had always lingered in the skies. It burst in 1661.[1]

In April the little girls at school at Port Royal des Champs were all disbanded by order of the King; in May the novices and postulants were sent away; on June 8 the Vicars-General of Paris (who were Gallican, in sympathy with Port Royal, yet submissive to the Pope) put forth again the Formulary, but prefaced by a Pastoral Letter requiring no more than a "respectful silence" for the point of fact: "que tous demeurent dans le respect entier et sincère qui est dû aux dites constitutions, sans prêcher, écrire et disputer au contraire; et que la signature en soit un témoignage . . . inviolable, par laquelle ils s'y engagent, comme de leur croyance pour la décision de foi." Silence, that is to say, for the point of fact; submission and belief for the point of faith: the old quibble dear to Arnauld and to Pascal. And it was rumoured that Pascal had helped the Vicars-General in the composition of their Pastoral Letter. . . . Jacqueline was alone in command at Port Royal when she received it: she read it in a storm of righteous indignation; she refused to sign: "False prudence, and true

[1] See the admirable chapter of Sainte-Beuve in his *Port Royal*, iii. 343 et seq.

cowardice!" she cried. "You think to appease our conscience with these tricks and shifts? *Il n'y a que la Vérité que délivre véritablement.*" A fortnight later, feeling that God had laid His red coal upon her lips, as on those of the prophet, Jacqueline wrote to the Prioress in Paris a letter, an open letter, meant in fact for Arnauld, in which we find the fire and fierceness, the mordant nervous sincerity of her brother. Yet did she not think that she was writing against her brother—her dear brother, her penitent of yesteryear, her prophet of yesterday? She quotes the *Provinciales*, and assimilates the Jesuitry of the Vicars-General to the manœuvres of Escobar. Her letter is admirable: Pascal might have written it!

"Je sais le respect que je dois à MM. les Evêques, mais ma conscience ne me permet pas de signer qu'une chose est dans un livre où je ne l'ai pas vue. Que craignons nous? . . . Mais peut-on nous retrancher de l'Eglise? Mais qui ne sait que personne n'en peut être retranchée malgré soi. . . . Nous pouvons bien être privés des marques, mais non jamais de l'effet de cette union, tant que nous conservons la charité. . . . User de déguisements et biaiser! . . . Je vous le demande, ma très chère sœur, au nom de Dieu, dîtes moi quelle différence vous trouvez entre ses déguisements et donner de l'encens à une idole sous prétexte d'une croix qu'on a dans sa manche?"

Sister Jacqueline de Sainte Euphémie had evidently read the *Provinciales*, for this is a reproach

that Louis de Montalte imputes to the Jesuit missionaries in China.

On the morrow of this fiery letter, Jacqueline's heart relented: she wrote to Arnauld begging him to show her missive to Pascal—"s'il se porte bien"; a touching testimony of sisterly anxiety. Her brother certainly saw the letter, and felt the vibration of the secret fibre that knit the heart of Jacqueline to his own. "Il ne pouvait plus aymer personne qu'il aymoit ma sœur," wrote Madame Périer; "car il y avait une si grande correspondance entre leurs sentiments qu'ils convenoient de tout; assurément leur cœur n'étoit qu'un cœur." Fortified by the faith and sincerity of Jacqueline, Pascal broke with the Vicars-General, with Arnauld, with Nicole, with M. Singlin, with all the prudent pastors of Port Royal and declared himself against the signing of the Formulary.

One must perhaps have lived in the heart of some great sect or faction (Home Rule, the Dreyfus affair, or Modernism) to realise how readily the sentiments of animosity and suspicion, exercised by incessant combat with an adversary, may divert and attack the different members of one party. Port Royal was immediately divided into two camps: those who went with Pascal, those who were with Arnauld. To sign, or not to sign, that was the question. In July 1661 Jacqueline signed; and she died in October—the brave Jacqueline who had exclaimed: "When bishops have the courage of

spinsters, it is time that spinsters should have the courage of bishops!" In bending that undaunted spirit, they had broken it—or rather, the heart was broken. At thirty-six years of age she died—"première victime de la signature."

In losing Jacqueline, Pascal went near to losing Port Royal. For now again, as after his father's death, his generous soul gave harbour to the projects, desires, and character of whom he mourned—taking on himself those activities which the beloved dead no longer can pursue. Dearly as he loved Arnauld, he maintained the ideas of Jacqueline harshly and angrily against Arnauld. The great Arnauld loved him still, and more than once risked life and liberty to go and see him; but Nicole (a smaller, smoother, suppler spirit) never quite forgave the despotic tone of Pascal's recriminations; and murmured, years after, that he could not endure "d'être si fièrement régenté." The Vicars-General having withdrawn their letter, and presented the Formulary in all its nakedness, the doctors of Port Royal drew up a "rider" which they advised the nuns to add to their signature—"considérant que dans l'ignorance où nous sommes de toutes les choses qui sont audessus de notre profession et de notre sexe, tout ce que nous pouvons est de rendre témoignage de la pureté de notre Foi." It was on this question that Pascal separated himself from his old friends and drew up indeed the draft of some unpublished *Petites Lettres*, as fierce as the *Pro-*

vinciales, but directed against Port Royal. One evening in November there was a conference of these warring spirits in Pascal's room; Pascal as usual was "accablé d'un mal de tête perpétuel," but he surmounted his weakness in the ardent effort to impress his convictions on the minds of his old friends. When he found them slip from his grasp unmodified, in the passion of his disappointment his head swam, and he fell senseless in a swoon. These loud voices, these unreasonable men with swelling throats, were they the representatives on earth of Infinite Unity—of Infinite Charity? . . . It was all his Past that failed him! In that hour of bitterness he too, no doubt, exclaimed: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" and in that quiet Jansenist parlour there rose, invisible, a cross on Calvary.

Assuredly the friends and adversaries of Pascal were touched by this testimony of his grief and anger. They knew that his physical state was responsible for the excitement and fever of his feelings. There were hours when the irritability of his nerves was such that it seemed impossible to please or satisfy him—until he became aware of this impatience of his spirit; and then (his sister tells us) he would melt into such a sudden sweetness "et reparoit incontinent sa faute par des traitemens si honnestes, qu'il n'a jamais perdu l'amitié de personne par là."

Indeed, Pascal, for all his fieriness, never lost a

friend. The choleric Roberval, Auzoult (whom he may have sacrificed unconsciously to his own supremacy); Descartes, who so grievously complained of him; the Duke of Roannez, whose young sister he had sent to a nunnery; Arnauld and Nicole, with whom he had so fiercely disputed the affair of the Formulary—not one of them could keep a sense of rancour against this soul of candour and sincerity—yes, perhaps Nicole! There was a charm in Pascal—something of his sister Jacqueline's sweetness and simplicity. Now that he was ill, forgetful of their late dissensions, Arnauld, who was in hiding, came more than once to see him *incognito*, and Nicole also visited him. "Il les reçut toujours avec toutes sortes de marques de tendresse et d'affection.[1] Probably the definitive refusal of Port Royal—from Arnauld to the youngest novice—to sign the Formulary as it was finally presented, pure and simple—the "Formulaire sans queue"—reconciled the three friends, Nicole, Arnauld and Pascal, in a peace that felt already the shadow of death and the darkness of the valley.

XIX

The health of Pascal declined from month to month. In August 1660 he had written to Fermat, the mathematician, "Je suis si faible que je ne puis

[1] *Recueil d'Utrecht*, p. 326.

marcher sans bâton, ni me tenir à cheval"; since then the death of Jacqueline, the austerities of his retreat, and the ardour of his religious passion, had exhausted his last reserve of strength. He could not read for long together—after a very little while the collection of his thoughts caused him a terrible headache, and the writing of the shortest page was painful. "Comme il ne pouvoit dans cet estat ny lire ny escrire, il estoit contraint de demeurer à rien faire et de s'aller promener, sans pouvoir penser à rien qui eust de la suite." The time came when he could not walk, when he could no longer go from church to church, or visit his poor pensioners; when a nervous constriction of the throat again made the swallowing a cup of broth a long and wearisome process.

It is, perhaps, idle to ask ourselves now-a-days what was the malady that carried Pascal off in the flower of his age on the eve of a thinker's maturity? Evidently many of the symptoms are those of neurasthenia. But a man does not die at barely nine-and-thirty of neurasthenia alone. If we remember that, despite this early death, Pascal lived longer than his mother or his younger sister, it is natural to seek the cause in one of those diseases that run through a race. His passionate, feverish temperament, the charm that qualified it, his genius even, all point one way: Pascal's illness was probably tuberculosis. It appears to have been an ulcerous consumption of the intestines, complicated

by the many nervous miseries—the languors, the migraines, the shooting pains, the faintness and dizzinesses, which so frequently are the companions of phthisis. A difficulty of speech, a frequent dysphagia, point also to an affection of the larnyx. And quite at the end of his life—but only quite at the end of his life—between the 14th and the 19th of August, 1662, the scene is closed by a violent cerebral disorder, probably a tubercular meningitis[1]: "Le dernier acte est sanglant."

Pascal had given house-room beneath his roof to a family of poor persons, whom he supplied with lodging and fuel without exacting any sort of service in return. In the month of June 1662 one of the children of this poor household fell sick of the small-pox. Pascal himself was ill with that languor and nervous weakness which kept him often in a state of death-in-life; and Madame Périer, who tended him, could not come and go between his house and hers lest she should carry the contagion to her children. Rather than expose his poor guests to the danger and discomfort of removal, Pascal consented to take up his abode with his sister. For some time beforehand he had been even more than usually unwell—with a distaste for nourishment, a lack of appetite, which prevented his taking any solid food. But he said there was less danger for him than for the child, in the fatigue of a change

[1] See *La Maladie de Pascal*, par le Dr. P. Just-Navarre. Lyon, 1911.

of lodging; so he left his home for ever on the 29th of June, 1662. And three days later he fell sick of that grievous colic which, after his death, was proved to have been caused by a gangrenous peritonitis.

Yet the doctors who visited him were not alarmed; they assured the anxious sister that there was not the slightest peril—"pas la moindre ombre de danger"—for they were accustomed to see in Pascal a confirmed nervous invalid, whose constant headache, frequent dysphagia, occasional paresia, were distressing symptoms, but not incompatible with existence. Pascal himself saw that his sufferings neared their close and bore them with an heroic patience which has left its noble print on the mask taken after death: "Il avait une patience consommée," wrote the Père Beurrier twenty years later, in a letter to Madame Périer's son. He submitted even to his sister's kindness, though that perhaps was the ascetic's sorest burden. Only, when she refused to let him be carried (as he entreated) to the Hospital for Incurables, he craved, as a last boon, that some sick poor man might share his room with him and benefit by all his advantages.

To this ardent charity he joined a serenity so admirable that it moved and astonished those who waited on him—his sister, first of all, who remembered him so irascible and so feverish. . . . His soul, which she had always known upright and sincere, delicate and charitable, yet often blindly violent, or languidly dejected, seemed at last to

have found its equilibrium in a perfect peace. And this peace augmented with his sufferings, although they were, as he allowed, extraordinary: "On ne sent pas mon mal, et on y sera trompé; mon mal de tête a quelque chose de fort extraordinaire. . . ." Yet he never once complained, and said: "Do not pity me. Is not suffering the natural state of a Christian? We are then as we ought always to be: freed from the claims of sensual pleasure; exempt from our passions; delivered from ambition; without avarice; ready for death! We have no other task than to submit ourselves, humbly, in all patience, to God's will."

Once, indeed, he murmured. For he said: "When I think that, while I am so well cared for, there are an infinity of sick, poor persons, more ill than I, who lack the very necessaries of life—oh, then I endure a pang that I scarcely can support! I do beg you to let me see that one of them at least is treated as well as I!" Father Beurrier, the Curé of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, the parish in which Madame Périer's house was situated, promised to discover such a room-mate for him so soon as he should return to his own house. But that was never to be: the end was at hand.

Father Beurrier attended Pascal in his last illness and received his confession. He seems to have been a dull, honest, excellent man, neither Jansenist nor Molinist, but Gallican and in sympathy with Port Royal. He knew Pascal as one of the authors of the Factums to the Curés of Paris, but not as Louis

de Montalte. "Je ne l'ai bien connu comme auteur des *Lettres au Provincial* qu'à sa mort." In several conversations with Pascal, he heard him say that for the last two years he had "*prudently retired*" from the arguments of Port Royal in order to think on his latter end and to meditate an Apology for true religion. "He told me that he groaned in spirit when he watched the disputes and divisions of the faithful, their quarrels *vivâ voce*, their written discussions, and the bitter things they said mutually of one another, which prejudiced that union and charity which should lead them all together against heretics and infidels." The sincerity of Father Beurrier is obvious. But the divisions of which Pascal complained and which he longed to heal were not those which separated Jesuits and Jansenists, but that more secret chasm which had sprung in the interior of Port Royal.

For our part we believe that on that 19th of August, 1662, when Pascal entered his rest through the thorny gates of a terrible agony, he thought of none of these things—of neither Jesuits nor Jansenists—but only of Jesus Christ, whom he had so fervently, so ardently adored. He had always been more orthodox than he imagined—"cet homme si grand en toutes choses estoit simple comme un enfant pour ce qui regarde la piété," wrote Gilberte. "Il est mort en très bon catholique," affirmed Father Beurrier.

In a page of the *Provinciales*, often quoted against Pascal, he had exclaimed: "Je ne suis pas

de Port Royal. . . . Je suis seul." It was no prevarication, thrown like a handful of dust in an enemy's eyes. Pascal had loved and served Port Royal; but his nature was essentially solitary. That great, passionate, avid soul—which he tried so often, so vainly to satisfy with various interests—was too large to be contained in the narrow bounds of any chapel, of any sect or company—"parce que ce gouffre infini ne peut être rempli que par un objet infini et immuable—c'est à dire par Dieu même." [1]

XX

Pascal, like one greater, had come to bring not peace, but a sword. Yet that healing, which he had longed to pour in the wounds of Port Royal, issued mysteriously from his tomb. The Jansenists closed round the memory of Pascal and, in an unwritten pact, agreed to stifle all echo of their old dissensions. The great man was theirs and theirs alone!

One of their first efforts was to enlighten Father Beurrier. With a persistence at once pathetic and almost disingenuous they besought him to say that he had been mistaken; Pascal had never abjured! There had been no rupture with Port Royal! And the good Curé of Saint Etienne wrote to Madame Périer a letter, which means as much as letters mean addressed to a great man's grieving relatives.

The Jesuits and their friends were no less ardent, no less aggressive. Father Rapin thundered against

[1] *Pensée* 425.

Beurrier: "Qu'il savait peu son métier, de laisser mourir un si grand calomniateur après tant d'impostures et de faussetés—après avoir volé l'honneur de son prochain—sans lui parler de satisfaction, en lui administrant les derniers sacrements." But the more wily of the ultramontanes adopted their old adversary. The Archbishop of Paris sent for Beurrier and desired him to write and sign a statement of Pascal's complete submission to the Church; and the worthy Curé wrote that his penitent had died "en très bon catholique, après avoir reçu les sacrements, dans une grande soumission à l'Eglise et à Notre Saint-Père le Pape." This declaration, which was to have been kept entirely secret save from the nuns of Port Royal, the Archbishop immediately sent to Rome, and spread abroad as testimony of a retractation *in extremis*. The Jansenists angrily retorted with harsh and eager eloquence. The fear of losing him confirmed them in their allegiance to their man of genius, and doubtless determined the subsequent publication of the *Pensées*. Pascal had died on the eve of a schism from the Church and a secession from Port Royal; and either claimed his memory as a relic to be treasured!

While the storm raged, the Curé of Saint-Etienne buried himself in his presbytery and confided to a scrap of paper, which he locked into his table-drawer: "I wrote that which I wrote,—*Quod scripsi, scripsi*." He had written of Pascal's retirement from Port Royal. He had never written: Retractation.

II

FÉNELON AND HIS FLOCK

"Son petit troupeau choisi, dont il était le cœur, l'âme, la vie et l'oracle."—SAINT-SIMON.

"Rien n'est si noble, si délicat, si grand, si héroïque, que le cœur d'un vrai chrétien."—FÉNELON, *Lettres Spirituelles.*

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II

FÉNELON AND HIS FLOCK

"Son petit troupeau choisi, dont il était le cœur, l'âme, la vie et l'oracle."—SAINT-SIMON, t. xi. ch. xxii.

TOWARDS the fortieth year of Louis XIV, in all the new perfection and grandeur of Versailles, a change began to steal over the spirit of the French ideal, as though the nation, like the King, had reached the farther side of youth; while the gathering years brought out in the brilliant *Roi-Soleil* an unsuspected likeness to his melancholy father. In that solid classic literature of the seventeenth century, a new note began to sound, plaintive, romantic. La Fontaine, summing up his pleasures, finds one dearer than them all—reaches beyond all customary delights—

> Jusqu'au sombre plaisir d'un cœur mélancolique—

as, in a solitude more pleasant than the Court,

> —Solitude, où je trouve une douceur secrète,—

he cherishes a melancholy heart. . . .

Here and there, already, in the poetry, the prose, and especially in the private correspondence of those times, a chime rings out, a peal of haunting bells, different from the official music of fife and trumpet. There is a sense of retreat and

recollection, best expressed in three French words: *Recueillement*, *Intimité*, *Sagesse*. Although the King destroyed (as invidious to religion and society) the solitudes of Port Royal, within a footstep of his throne-room such a solitude arose, but interior; and in those dazzling galleries of mirrors, a new desire awoke for something deep, essential, aloof. In coteries and corners, a few chosen friends confided to each other their delight in an honest mystery, and dreamed together of the spiritual life. Persons occupied with great affairs met in a new ideal secretly, as though it were a catacomb. Their lives and what is left of their spiritual letters avoided publicity, attained it by accident, and their works remain a classic—but a classic rarely opened. Their genius is full of a dreamy languor, as quiet, as unresisting, as the fall of autumn leaves on windless afternoons; their minds are singularly pure and vast, like the wide grey views from terraced balustrades which command a great stretch of country: and yet, with all this largeness, their memories exhale a subtle spirit of suffering, as though we trod verbena underfoot. It is the melancholy of renunciation, or, as Fénelon would say, "un *Amen* continuel au fond du cœur."

No less than great calamities, the tediousness of system drives inwards the souls of men and encourages a mystical religion. Not Rome itself—not the monotonous magnificent tedium of the Roman Empire—could equal the *ennui* of Versailles. A

life of constant ceremony without retirement provokes such a sense of arid forsakenness as no mere lonesomeness can attain. There is a sort of peace in solitude. Let us read the letters of Madame de Maintenon, the memoirs of Saint-Simon, in order to plumb such an abyss of weariness as no man or woman could endure without an inward refuge.

What was Versailles? A palace without a capital, self-centred; a monument unfinished, whose ornaments were rising day by day. At the bidding of the King, a new city grew and budded round the palace, like that city of Salente, which Mentor was to visit with his pupil, Télémaque—

"C'était une ville naissante, semblable à une jeune plante. Chaque jour, chaque heure elle croissait avec magnificence, à chaque moment qu'on la voit on y trouve un nouvel éclat. Toute la côte retentissait des cris des ouvriers et des coups de marteau; les pierres étaient suspendues en l'air avec des cordes, et le roi Idoménée, donnant partout les ordres lui-même, faisait avancer les ouvrages avec une incroyable diligence."

There is a singular melancholy which is endemic in new quarters; nothing roots there; no associations have had time to form: all is recent, unripe, jejune and rigid. Towards 1682, when first the Court came to dwell in the unfinished marvel of its palace, Versailles was a new quarter, like that vast suburb of recent Rome which appears a desert beside the ruins of antiquity. The light white plaster-dust eddied

and drifted in those symmetrical streets and powdered the branches of the spindly trees beginning to take root along its pompous avenues. Thousands of men were toiling at Marly to raise the waters of the Seine and flood the new canals and fountains. And the fresh walls glittered white in the flat country-side. The courtiers, incessantly hurrying down the corridors of the palace, were, like the building itself, new to the place; detached from their families and occupations, they stood there on view, like cut flowers in sand, drawing no nourishment from their divided roots. His Majesty's pleasure was their one affair. He expected them to pay him the respect of their attendance, and could blight any man's future with the phrase, "C'est un homme que je ne vois jamais."

Therefore the throng of his satellites crowded round him, drifting from corridor to corridor, according to the rumour of his passage. Behold them, in defiance of catarrh and toothache, pacing the windy gardens through blustering March and damp October, for the King (sole of his Court) was insensible to weather and happiest out of doors; yet should he imagine himself to be amused or occupied within, there they are again, mute and smiling, standing elegantly in decorative groups through endless afternoons, while His Majesty shuffles his cards or appears engrossed at his writing-table. Hurrying hither and thither, or wearily dawdling, in the dazed and purposeless fatigue of dumb

supernumeraries, these persons learned in a hard school the value of solitude, of nature, of independence, and prepared the Romantic spirit of a succeeding age. Madame de Maintenon, passing her life among them, understands and murmurs—

"Il n'y a rien de pareil à l'ennui qui les dévore!" "You think you are dull at school," she says to her young pensioners at Saint-Cyr. "Contrast your liberty with our life at Court! When the King is in my room I keep at a respectful distance; if he be occupied, no one speaks. If you were in my place, in my chamber (which is the most privileged circle of the Court), during a great part of your life, silent and motionless, you would be more than dull. I tell you, you would burst! *Vous pétilleriez!*"

In this atmosphere of grandeur and monotony there were minds that aspired to a supersensual sphere; in the comfortless splendour of Versailles there were men who remembered the life of Nature and hankered after their country home—men who, like Fénelon, would write, in flat Versailles, an ode in praise of distant mountain-tops—who, like Racine, would murmur, in the alleys of the Park—

"Quand elle est en liberté
La Nature est inimitable——"

Among the wars and rumours of wars, there were men who dared to dream of peace; and, among the "glittering beings of Versailles" (as Arthur Young was to call them), certain wise and tender hearts recalled the miserable condition of the poor. There

was La Bruyère, there was Racine; above all, there was Fénelon.

The inner life, the love of solitude, a passionate pity for the poor, the sense of Nature, an admiration for mountain scenery—these are scattered traits which, sixty years later, Rousseau shall find, gathering from these dropped seeds the sheaves of an ample harvest. Those days are still far off, and we must not exaggerate the dawning romantic tendency in Fénelon. But, discerning it, we find it easy to understand why the idealists of the later eighteenth century claimed an ancestor in the author of "Télémaque." The good archbishop, seeking in person a farmer's strayed or stolen cow and bringing it home at nightfall to its vacant stable; or binding the wounds of his enemies on the field of Malplaquet; or emptying his granaries to feed the poor —is an "homme sensible" of the sort dear to Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. No age comes into being at once, complete and perfect. In the zenith of the classic reign something, still new and frail, was born into the land of France—less solid and brilliant than the Elder Order—a spirit of compassion, grace, and solitude, still ignorant of its aim, seeking Infinity, vaguely, not without hope.

I

Fénelon at Court had one immense advantage. He was no *bourgeois*, but a gentleman, a Gascon

cadet with many quarters in his scutcheon which did not plenish an empty purse. We know little of his childhood, save that it was spent in Périgord, in the old castle of Fénelon, where he was born in 1651. The castle still exists—great romantic towers, vast and formidable walls, crowning a summit that rises sheer from the banks of the Dordogne—at this point a considerable river. Behind swell and rise those hills of Périgord which Fénelon was to celebrate in the first French ode (I think) on mountain scenery—

> Montagnes de qui l'audace
> Va porter jusques aux cieux
> Un front d'éternelle glace . . .
> . . . Vos sommets sont des campagnes
> Qui portent d'autres montagnes.

Fénelon (who sang so truthfully the charms of these high plateaus where the flocks feed and stray, where the grass is full of flowers, where by every stream a great lime-tree springs)—Fénelon must have wandered there often enough with the tribe of his brothers and sisters. He never lost his taste for a "beau désert" (it must have seemed an inexplicable taste to the formal seventeenth century), and in his *Dialogue des Morts* one of his personages remarks—

"N'admirez-vous pas ces ruisseaux qui tombent des montagnes? Ces rochers escarpés et en partie couverts de mousse? Ces vieux arbres, qui paraissent aussi anciens que la terre où ils sont plantés? *La Nature a ici je ne sais quoi de brut qui plaît, et qui fait rêver agréablement.*"

Fénelon was the second son of his father's second marriage; he had fourteen brothers and sisters. Their house, which dated from the tenth century, was so illustrious and so poor that more than one of these children was destined to find a refuge in the Church: the pursuit of arms, the charges of the Court, the Church were the principal issues open to its sons. But the young Fénelons who took orders were curiously different to our idea of a French abbé under Louis XIV: one of them died a missionary in Canada, while our Fénelon dreamed of evangelising the countries of the East,—(the Call of the East, another romantic sentiment! It appears as if Fénelon had improvised them all). "Je me sens transporté dans ces beaux lieux et parmi ces ruines précieuses, pour y recueillir, avec les plus curieux monuments, l'esprit même de l'antiquité." So runs an early letter in which the fervour of the missionary rivals with the passionate curiosity of the antiquary. The Church was to employ his apostolic ardours nearer home.

Fénelon's father died when the child was twelve years old. The inventory of his estate has recently been found—pathetic record of worn and faded glories: great tapestries and hangings from the immense banqueting-hall, "fort usées," "rapiécées"; three-and-thirty half-length ancestral portraits, "représentant des illustres"; a few stools, "usés"; a great old press for keeping preserves and stores, "où il n'y a plus de confitures." Tables,

chests, and velvet-cushioned chairs, and great carpets, and purple silk hangings, and silver candlesticks—all "usés, fort usés, usés et rompus." Even in the stables the horses are of this sort: of the two coach-horses, twelve years old, one is blind; and there is, beside, a one-eyed mare, another with a sprained shoulder, and a very old sorrel pony "qui sert aux enfants"—"fort vieux"! [1] And Fénelon's portion in this estate was naturally small. "Fénelon était un homme de qualité qui n'avait rien," observed Saint-Simon. He had, at any rate, two uncles: one of them, Bishop of Sarlat; the other, the Marquis de Fénelon—once a soldier, next a saint—was the friend and lay helper of M. Olier, the founder of the Order of Saint Sulpice. In the house of the Marquis of Fénelon, the charming, chivalrous, Quixotic young nephew from Périgord came into contact with the spirit of Paris.

The Marquis of Fénelon, before his sudden conversion, had been a famous duellist. His influence could only enforce in his nephew that quick sense of honour, that instinct of "Noblesse oblige" which ran in his blood, and which no religion could subdue. He felt the value and the responsibilities of birth and breeding. It lay in his nature to protect rather than to appeal; to defend, to redress, to maintain, rather than to consider his own advantage. He was mild, but not meek. He was gentle, but authori-

[1] F. Strowski, "Fénelon et son pays," *Revue de Fribourg*, Juillet Août, 1903.

tative. He was supple, and even insinuating, and yet he was brave to temerity, and (as Madame de Maintenon remarked) the frankest of men.

Never servile, like Bossuet, who (the jest ran) had a joint too many in his spine when he passed from the presence of the altar to the presence of the throne, or who—as another contemporary noted—"manque d'os"; never absent-minded like the dreamy scholar Racine, who asked the King and Madame de Maintenon their opinion of Scarron's overrated works; Fénelon, in every situation, knew what was the course a gentleman should pursue. This accident of a scutcheon was in his case a possession so essential, and coloured so deeply all his views of life, that we can no more pass it over than leave out his quality of Churchman. When the eighteenth century adopted Fénelon for its father, it chose to forget the feudal and theocratic element in all his projects of reform. True, he turned in revolt from the oppression of the poor; true, he loved to contemplate a France renewed, in which the King should be much less, the people something more; but it was not the France of the Revolution that he foresaw, but a State much like the pious, prosperous Jesuit missions in Paraguay (for they were prosperous then): a kingdom in which monarch, noble, priest should diffuse an immense, yet tempered, liberty.

From the house of his uncle, the Marquis of Fénelon, the young ecclesiastic entered the seminary

of Saint-Sulpice—which discovered a middle path between the worldly pliableness of the Jesuits and the rigid pessimism of Port Royal. It is the glory of Saint-Sulpice (if we take our stand on the profaner slopes of Parnassus) that in two hundred years it has produced, first a Fénelon, then a Renan, minds not dissimilar in their romantic elegance, their solid and modest learning, their radiant philosophy, as also in something detached, ethereal, exquisite, which makes them appear spirits elect, speaking to the chosen few, while the deep heart in either is filled with a poignant pity for the multitude. Fénelon had, moreover, this further advantage, that he was a saint. If Rome had not reproached him, she must have canonised him. The Sulpician Fathers grounded Fénelon solidly on the classics —a term which, in France, nearly always means the Latin classics—but Fénelon, like Racine, was a son of Hellas. His mellow, silvery phrase, gracious, stript and lucid, is at once noble and familiar; it has no trace of the Roman emphasis, the Roman redundance. Without Homer, could he have written "Télémaque"? Without Plato, we cannot imagine the Christianity of this unusual archbishop.

On leaving Saint-Sulpice, Fénelon was appointed Superior of the Nouvelles-Catholiques, a community for the reception of young Huguenot ladies converted to Rome—sometimes from conviction and frequently by force. The gracious and charming Fénelon (at that time twenty-seven years of age)

was ever a favourite of the Goddess Peitho; one of his rules of life was "Ne payez d'autorité que lorsque la persuasion manque!" Yet all his long, lean person was instinct with authority, with a tender domination, a prestige hard to withstand. He moved light and swift in his ecclesiastical dress, a tall, thin Abbé, with dark hair waving on the long neck and high forehead; something secret, kind and pure pierced his aquiline visage, and eyes—eyes from which (avers Saint-Simon, who did not love him),

"fire and mind rushed as in a torrent, with an expression such as I have never seen the like of in any other visage, so aptly did it mingle grave and gay, the earnest and the gallant, in a look which would have suited equally a great lord, a bishop, or a learned doctor; the whole person of the man was radiant with thought, wit, and a sober grace which blent in an air so unutterably noble that it was with an effort I took my glance from his face."

Neither platitude nor candour lurked in his fresh unworldliness: he was other-worldly rather than unworldly. He was disinterested, because he cared so little for anything you could offer him, were you Majesty itself: unless, indeed, you chose to consecrate to him the very inmost marrow of your heart and soul. Try to disgrace such a man, he soared out of your reach and shed a glory elsewhere—not on you! That was one reason, doubtless, why the King disliked him. Louis preferred men whom he could

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make or mar. The Duke de Beauvilliers alone among his ministers was of noble birth. A Fouquet or a Colbert was his creation and his creature; but a Fénelon had roots of his own, and flowered aloof.

At his uncle's house this young Churchman mingled intimately with a choice society, with the Duke and Duchess of Beauvilliers, and with Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux: three persons whose lives were destined to remain inextricably intertwined with his. Bossuet showed him great affection; Fénelon sat at the Bishop's feet in young enthusiasm. But with Paul de Beauvilliers, a man near his own age, he contracted a closer friendship and one that was destined to endure throughout their lives.

II

The Duke of Beauvilliers had married Colbert's second daughter, whose sisters were the Duchess of Chevreuse and the Duchess of Mortemart. Whenever, in Fénelon's correspondence, we read the abbreviation *le b. d.* (or *le B. D.*), we may be sure that the "Bon Duc" is Paul de Beauvilliers; he is the Philoclès of *Télémaque*: "l'homme nécessaire," generous and patient, indifferent to favour or disgrace, harsh indeed, "sec et austère," flattering no one, not even the King. "Il n'aime que la vérité et vous," says Mentor to the monarch, "et vous aime mieux que vous ne savez vous aimer." Doubtless

Louis felt the quality of this disinterested devotion, for he put his trust in Beauvilliers, in accordance with that excellent instinct which redeemed in him a mind merely serious and mediocre. One day, at the camp in Flanders, when the young courtiers were jesting round the King's tent door, they saw the Duke stalking on in front, all by himself, stiff and prim : "There goes the Duke of Beauvilliers, saying his prayers!" The King overheard them, and said, in a tone which ensured a long term of respect, "Ay, there goes the Duke of Beauvilliers, one of the sagest and wisest men in my court and kingdom."

Destined to the Church, a Duke against his will (owing to the death of two elder brothers), Beauvilliers retained much of the mind and manners of an ecclesiastic. His character was secret and circumspect, enamoured of privacy, incapable of feigning. It says much for King Louis that his peculiar confidant was a man who never courted a Royal mistress nor renounced a friend in disgrace.

He was practical, liberal, intelligent and dull; there have been in modern England several Low-Church peers and statesmen not unlike the Duke of Beauvilliers. A tall man, angular and lean, with a long, high-coloured face, small, piercing eyes, thick lips and a great hook nose, the ice of his aspect would suddenly melt in the kindest of smiles. Precise and prudent, his opinion was valuable, though his cleverness was nothing more than what sagacity and experience could furnish. He had, however,

one quality which was a sort of genius—indeed, rarer than genius at the Court of King Louis—and that was a detachment from his own interests so absolute as to give him a large outlook which greater talents lacked. He was solidly humble. He was infinitely respected, stiff, and a little ridiculous. The Duke was not popular—for something constrained, something solitary and scrupulous in the way of him, hid the real generosity, the earnest faithfulness of a deep, if narrow, heart. He was no general lover. "Mais ce qu'il aimait" (wrote Saint-Simon) "il l'aimoit bien, pourvu qu'il pût aussi l'estimer."

The Duchess was a lady of no common ugliness, with whom he lived in the closest union, and by whom he had ten children. Never was a happier couple. Never was a more intimate quartette than the Duke and Duchess of Beauvilliers, and their sister and brother-in-law, the Duke and Duchess of Chevreuse. The plain-featured Duchess of Beauvilliers was a woman of wit and taste; her dress, her furniture, her table, her conversation, were delightful. She would have shone in society, but so tenderly did she espouse her husband's will, that she lived at Versailles the life of a hermit, in so far as that was compatible with her duties at Court; till at length she caught a veneer of the Duke's starchy simplicity, which spoiled her natural grace, at least for strangers.

Her elder sister had married the Duke of Chev-

reuse. It was said at Court that while on every possible subject the two Dukes thought the same thought, and said the same words, Beauvilliers had a good angel of his own, who kept him from doing the same deeds as his brother-in-law. Chevreuse was one of those men who never say a foolish thing and seldom do a wise one. He was dreamy and eloquent. The Duke and Duchess of Chevreuse were loved, liked, revelled in, where the Duke and Duchess of Beauvilliers were just esteemed. Chevreuse was a fine, handsome man, stately in figure and deliberate in address, not without a hint of his brother-in-law's starchiness (at least on formal occasions), but in private conversation he held his audience under a charm, and they saw the brilliant chimerical idealist he was. His father, the Duke of Luynes, had sent him to school at Port Royal, and, though he had long since abandoned the doctrines, he kept the solid culture and the staunch, plain sincerity of the Jansenists, but mingled them quaintly with a native unreasonableness of his own. The love of solitude haunted him like a passion —to a degree which Saint-Simon frankly calls "indecent"—and when commanded on a Royal visit to Marly, or when on duty at Versailles, he would dreamily steal away to his château of Dampierre, and be found there, oblivious of time and place, among the books in his library, happier than the King. His unpunctuality led him into grotesque adventures. He never could remember when to get

up or when to go to bed. With a book in his hand, he forgot the flight of time, and while he read in his study, his coach and horses, ordered to await his pleasure, would stand at his door for ten hours at a stretch. His comic absent-mindedness atoned to the public for the serious excellence of his learning, and made him a popular figure with courtiers who resented the pedantry of Beauvilliers. The exact Beauvilliers saw the world as it is, in the cold daylight of experience; M. de Chevreuse was all wit, sentiment, instinct, utopia. No man had so many reasons and theories, which, starting from the most specious premises, landed his bewildered interlocutors in Heaven knows what land of Kennaquhair, without an apparent flaw in their logic. His words were all flickering and shimmering with the light that never was on sea or land. "Il voyoit tout en blanc," wrote Saint-Simon, "et en pleine espérance;—son trop de lumières l'éblouissoit de faux jours." The disorder of his genius, and the extraordinary mismanagement of his private affairs, did not prevent him from being an able minister. He was an incomparable friend, the cheerfullest of men, nothing troubled his serenity, and in the depth of calamity he still thought that all was ordered for the best. One would suppose that such a character must clash with the dour sagacity of a Beauvilliers : never was there such a union, such a perfect harmony. The two Dukes with their Duchesses lodged together at Marly, occupied neighbouring apart-

ments in the palace at Versailles and had their town houses without the palace gates, and their country houses, so close together that their intimacy was uninterrupted. They saw each other several times a day, dined in each other's company, shared the same narrow coterie of pious friends, the same exalted religion, the same political ideas. The Duchess of Chevreuse was all sweetness and bright humour. A dark handsome creature, far less clever than her sister, but more considered, more loved, wherever she went she was the soul of peace and union. The King was a martinet for etiquette; before him neither mistress, wife, nor child dared appear in public (however sick or sorry) unless powdered, painted, laced and bejewelled; yet he received *one* lady in her *négligé :* the Duchess of Chevreuse. A sort of sweet, saintly abandonment emanated from her presence. The two ducal couples, Beauvilliers and Chevreuse, unlike and inseparable, dwelt together in harmony, the solid regularity of the one forming, as it were, a musical bass for the dreamy arpeggios and cadences of the other.

The dinner-table at the Hôtel de Beauvilliers, usually spread for four—the two Dukes, the two Duchesses—was often laid for five or six. The youngest daughter of Colbert was the widowed Duchess of Mortemart. Piquante, frank and worldly, one day she had flung the world to the winds, set her face heavenwards, aimed at being the

Great Soul, finding perhaps a pious excitement in the frequent prayer-meetings of the Hôtel de Beauvilliers. She sat under the Abbé de Fénelon with a deep devotedness. But the real Great Soul of the little clique was the Duchess of Béthune-Charost, a middle-aged woman, some years older than either Duke. She was Fouquet's daughter. An equal devotion to the same mystical ideas united her in an inseparable friendship with the three daughters of Colbert, the man who had ruined her father. Her real merit and ordinary intelligence, having seen the dupery of success, had sought refuge in an oratory. A pious, placid woman, she filled her friends, and Fénelon among her friends, with a vast veneration for certain spiritual virtues which haloed the mediocrity of her mind and person.

This pious coterie of mystical dukes and duchesses used to meet at Versailles, in the little cabinet of the Duchess of Beauvilliers, "au coin de la petite cheminée de marbre blanc," or at one of their pleasant country houses in the neighbouring woods, at Vaucresson, at Dampierre, or at the Duchesse de Béthune's place at Beynes. We can imagine the tranquil, grey-walled *salon* (a little worn and shabby, as is the way of France), the studious spiritual scholars and their wives, grouped, as fragments of steel are grouped by the magnet, round one central figure, which drew each and all with an irresistible fidelity—and that central figure, of course, was Fénelon.

They shared their secrets. If the Abbé dispensed to them the sources of a spiritual life, the Dukes divided with him their anxieties for the welfare of the kingdom. France was ruined. The magnificent harmony of grandeur, felicity and order which had glorified France during the middle years of Louis XIV had now sunk into the monotonous complaint of exhausted and dwindling instruments. France in 1687 was much in the condition she was to know again after the Napoleonic wars: depopulated, ruined, discontented. The King's battles and the King's palaces and the King's debts had reduced the nation to misery. Beauvilliers was chief of the Council of Finance, and his conscience was aghast at the extortions which the Court exacted from a country almost bankrupt, in order to pay for architectural splendour. This little group of would-be regenerators discussed together many a project of Reform. Peace, Retrenchment, Pity, were their watchwords. But none of them hoped much from the selfish, pompous monarch. Their group had weight with him: they might secure a prolongation of peace; but for a real reform they must look further ahead. They were Mystics: time was to them a thing of no account; the present day, that which they prized the least. They sowed their seeds and looked ahead, confident in the grace of God. They had far to look. The heir to the throne was a young man under thirty, a handsome clod, sunk in stupid pleasures. They prayed; they hoped; they

believed that in His own time the Eternal would take pity on the land of France and raise to the throne a new Saint Louis.

III

One other friend, outside this noble group, had shared the confidence of the young Abbé de Fénelon and awoke in his chivalrous nature a pious enthusiasm: that friend—some four-and-twenty years older than himself—was a man of the noblest character, the highest standing, a great prelate, an extraordinary genius—that friend was Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux. He appealed to the tensest fibres in Fénelon's nature: the religious spirit and the sense of artistic excellence. The young Abbé venerated the Bishop and admired the incomparable orator.

Although we remember him, in the days of his fame and disenchantment, as a man reserved and secret, yet in his youth Fénelon was expansive, enthusiastic—a true son of Languedoc. He hung on the lips of his dear master—he was full of his praises; with his friend Langeron he hovered constantly in the prelate's society; and a cynical observer—("satirique, piquant, difficile, avantageux et railleur," writes Saint-Simon)—watched and waited as though there must be some deep design in the prodigality of all this incense. This is how it struck the Abbé Phelipeaux, an Angevine priest in

Bossuet's service: "Pendant les repas et les promenades, Fénelon et Langeron louaient sans cesse le prélat jusqu' à l'en fatiguer. . . . Le prélat en rougissait souvent, leur en témoignait publiquement son dégoût, et les priait de s'en abstenir. La Bruyère, homme sincère et naturel, était outré. Il me disait quelquefois à l'oreille: 'Quel empoisonnement! Peut-on porter la flatterie à cet excès!' Voilà, lui disais-je, pour vous la matière d'un beau caractère."

But it was not flattery. It was the first entranced, enthralled delight of an ardent young soul in presence of its ideal. Bossuet was everything to the two young men—they followed him, venerated him, adored him, poked delighted fun at him, criticised him with bated breath, worshipped him with every faculty, as is the way of generous undisciplined youth. And even later, "when whispering tongues had poisoned truth," a certain tenderness and awe for the idol of past years remained with Fénelon, melting him to rash submissions that could have no morrow.

Ah, Bossuet—"Vous êtes plein de fentes par où le sublime échappe de tous côtés"—full of chinks and clefts which let out the sublime in all directions—(the phrase is Langeron's)—but had you never a moment of remorse when in later years you remembered the innocent adoration of these youths? At first the Bishop accepted it sweetly. He speaks of Fénelon with affection in his correspondence:

"Enfin, Madame, nous ne perdrons pas M. l'Abbé de Fénelon; vous pourrez en jouir, et moi, quoique provincial, je m'échapperai quelquefois pour aller l'embrasser."

And it is probable (so at least says M. Jules Lemaître in his delightful life of Fénelon) that it was at Bossuet's request that, in 1678, the Archbishop of Paris named the Abbé de Fénelon, at twenty-seven years of age, Superior of the Convent of Nouvelles Catholiques.

But when (after a mission to convert the Protestants of Poitou) Fénelon returned to Paris, a few years later—prominent, eminent, the man of the hour—already a secret jar disturbed the harmony of these great minds. The antagonism of nature between Bossuet and Fénelon was too deep and too essential for their friendship to be lasting: Bossuet, with his Hebrew grandeur and his lyric magnificence, yet candid, awkward, tactless and tremendous; Fénelon, with his supple delicacy, his philosophic force and elevation, his independence, his aristocratic aloofness, his romantic sensibility. Their aims, their ideals were as the poles asunder. Bossuet was essentially a churchman, Fénelon essentially a mystic, seeking an inner, secret way to unite the life of man with the Infinite Life beyond. Bossuet was a good Christian rather than a saint, and Fénelon, perhaps, was rather a saint than an orthodox Christian. Bossuet's most acute biographer, M. Rebelliau, admits that his great man

was lacking in "tact, adresse, sentiment des nuances et des distinctions nécessaires"; Fénelon was exquisitely sensitive, bound to suffer by such a contact; it was the old story of the porcelain vase and the brazen pot.

Not only their feelings, but their conceptions of religion were divergent. Bossuet was solid and sincere, his faith stood foursquare to all the winds that blow; and, like a poet on his tripos, he glorified and transfigured the commonplace. A feeling was always more to him than an idea, and an image truer than a notion.

Fénelon, on the contrary (infinitely less admirable and abundant in expression), was a man who lived in relation to the immense Infinite in time and space, conceived as a whole. It is a mistake to accuse him of ambition. He felt the smallness of his personal interests, conceiving that he was alive to serve the Sum and Soul of things, not counting on the service of God to him, either in answer to prayer, or in the reaping of advantage, in this world or the next. He had little of Bossuet's cordial unction and self-gratulation in the personal presence of Christ. After the first effervescence of youth had subsided, his spiritual condition was often that which he describes as "une paix amère et sèche," a state not essentially different from that intellectual love of God which Spinoza expressly declares to be beyond emotion. . . . And Fénelon also says: "*On aime d'autant plus purement alors*

qu'on aime sans sentir, comme on croit avec plus de mérite lorsqu'on croit sans voir." In his eyes this attitude of acquiescence, of acceptation, of supple adaptability to the will of God was, in truth, *religion*,—that, and not imaginative fervour, not spiritual ecstasy, not the zeal for austerities or the zest for good works.

He thought, with Dante, "In la sua voluntade è nostra pace," and his one prayer was *Fiat voluntas tua!*

Thus these two great Catholics, both so admirable, so sincere, so fine and noble,—men, too, who had begun with a tender friendliness,—were constituted in such a way that the religion of either appeared to the other an error, if not a heresy.

It is possible that Bossuet may have felt that secret shudder of the old who feel their power escaping them, their virtue gone out of them, oozing invisibly into nothingness, when his young friend (no longer quite so young) installed himself in Paris—the unconfessed director of the Court! All that Bossuet had let slip from him—the control over the movement of ideas, the rule and authority over those that influence the world—all this had mysteriously passed into the keeping of Fénelon.

IV

Pedagogy was the sport and the science of the hour. The amelioration of a Chosen Few interested the society of Louis Quatorze with a passion as vivid and as deep as our own age brings to bear on the improvement of horses. Kings then had a school instead of a stud. Locke, in England, was meditating his *Thoughts on the Education of Children*, when Fénelon in France wrote his famous essay on the *Training of Girls*. In France, the question took a keener edge from the fact that the secret Queen was a retired governess, while the King (a man of serious and mediocre mind, naturally predisposed to the regular and the grandiose) was ignorant—extraordinarily ignorant—and resenting this ignorance, had, for all the technique of training, the superstition of an able, ill-instructed man. He had sense, grace and judgment; yet he could not take part in the most ordinary conversation on geography or history without falling into some ludicrous mistake. Capable of correcting himself, he would speak bitterly, then, of his lack of grounding, would recall his childhood spent with servants' children, ill-tended, untaught. He had tried to make a scholar of his stupid son, the Dauphin, by handing him over to Bossuet and Montausier. But perhaps the surest way of producing a Sancho Panza is to send an average boy to the school of Don Quixote. Once free of his tutors,

the Dauphin never opened a book. He was a dull, heavy, rather vulgar young man, with no interests beyond his creature-comforts.

The King had produced no prodigy; but he continued to believe in education. Madame de Maintenon was full of schemes for the training of girls. In 1684 she conceived (and opened in 1686, at Saint-Cyr near Versailles) a college for young ladies, poor, but of noble birth. There were 250 pupils, housed in a palace built by Mansart, which was situated in a park of nearly sixty acres. The King named the candidates and dowered them when they left the school; their education was entrusted to a community of thirty-six professed nuns and twenty-four affiliated associates—all noble, and many of them distinguished.

This High School of Saint-Cyr was a constant topic of conversation at the Court: of all topics the most interesting to Madame de Maintenon. When Fénelon in 1687 began his career as an author, with a book on *L'Education des Filles*, the subject appeared adroitly chosen, although, as a fact, he had been engaged upon it before the inception of Saint-Cyr—indeed since 1681—the matter having been suggested by his work among the Nouvelles-Catholiques. He had written it less for fame than for friendship. The Duchess of Beauvilliers was the mother of eight daughters, and it was for her that he had composed the book.

There is in *L'Education des Filles* something

of the sweet utility and modest wisdom of Xenophon. We understand why the men of '89 appropriated Fénelon, when we read a passage like the following, published ninety-nine years before the Revolution—Fénelon begs his pupils to speak gently to their servants, not to look on their lackeys "à peu près comme des chevaux." He complains—

"On se croit d'une autre nature que les valets; on suppose qu'ils sont faits pour la commodité de leurs maîtres. Tachez de montrer combien ces maximes sont contraires à la modestie pour soi, et à l'humanité pour son prochain. Faites entendre que les hommes ne sont pas faits pour être servis; que c'est une erreur brutale de croire qu'il y ait des hommes nés pour flatter la paresse et l'orgueil des autres; que, le service étant établi contre l'égalité naturelle des hommes, il faut l'adoucir autant qu'on le peut."

The seventeenth century was an age of learned ladies. In our day of colleges it would be difficult to produce a more accomplished scholar than Madame Dacier, or better educated women than Madame de Sévigné and Madame de Lafayette. Fénelon looked farther afield than a library; he would have his pupils acquainted with the practical details of law; he would make them land surveyors and estate agents for their husbands' acres, practically interested in the condition of the poor, capable of organising village schools, charitable clubs and associations. But our Platonist is at his happiest

when he endeavours to persuade a little girl of the separate existence of the soul.

Fénelon's little book leapt into fame and found, naturally, no prompter reader than Madame de Maintenon. She was intimate with the Beauvilliers, who had not consented to receive into their intimacy Madame de Montespan, despite her connection with their house, on account of her adultery with the King. Minister of the lover and kinsman of the mistress, the Duke of Beauvilliers had reserved his private life: "ils étoient fort jaloux de leur intrinsèque." But they admitted the King's unacknowledged wife. Although devoted to an existence of claustral retreat—inaccessible to mortals, rapt in the farthest blue—Madame de Maintenon so far departed from her pious rule as to dine with the Beauvilliers once or twice a week, she the fifth at table, between the two Dukes and the two Duchesses, with a handbell by the dish, to allow for the absence of servants. Sometimes there was a sixth place laid at dinner—for the Duchess of Mortemart or the Abbé de Fénelon. Very soon Madame de Maintenon began to respond to the charm, the spiritual grandeur of Fénelon. Despite her knack of managing, her intense desire to be respectable, and her constant longing for something to happen (something fresh, delightful, never experienced), despite this strong worldly strain in her, Madame de Maintenon felt the attraction of the mystical abyss. . . . She was a Soul.

Françoise d'Aubigné, Madame Paul Scarron, Marquise de Maintenon, was a Huguenot by birth, a granddaughter of the great Agrippa d'Aubigné, the friend of Henri Quatre. Born in the prison of Niort, her parents had carried her in childhood to Martinique, but, after six years spent in the Antilles, on her father's death she had returned to France utterly impoverished. She had first been adopted by a Protestant aunt, whom she adored, and then by a Catholic aunt, whom she hated; she had been converted by force; and at seventeen, penniless and pretty, she had made a purely formal marriage with a man of some genius, in his line, the comic poet, Paul Scarron. Scarron had lost the use of his limbs; he married to find a nurse, and she to have a home. Versailles and Paris crowded to their meagre table, where the lovely Madame Scarron would tell a story to supply the place of the absent joint. Her wonderful grey-black eyes and her husband's laughter made them the best company in town, and these were certainly the merriest, happiest years in all the life of Françoise d'Aubigné. Her husband died . . .

> "Passant, ne fais ici de bruit!
> Prends garde qu'aucun ne l'éveille,
> Car voici la première nuit
> Que le pauvre Scarron sommeille."

And Madame Scarron, poorer than ever, retired with one servant, to one room, on the top floor of a convent near Saint-Eustache.

She was literally on the parish, when the Queen bestowed on her a pension of two thousand francs. The young virgin-widow had many friends ("en tout bien, tout honneur"), who helped her in many ways, and her poor circumstances did not exclude her from the best society. The noblest hostesses were pleased to receive the modest, pleasant little lady, so convenient for running errands, so obliging in fetching a log for the fire, or dispatching a lackey to call a coach—the handbell (so much in request at the Hôtel de Beauvilliers) did not come into general use until a few years later; and Madame Scarron was the bell. It was at the Hôtel de Richelieu, or the Hôtel d'Albret, that she first made the acquaintance of Madame de Montespan, the King's mistress, who engaged the young widow as governess to bring up in secret a brood of illegitimate royal princelings. At first the King could not endure Madame Scarron. There was in her something fragile, affected, which he declared "insupportable, précieux, guindé." . . . It is said that there exists in the forests of Paraguay a small flower, so sallow of aspect, and so faint of odour, that none remark it. Yet if the traveller chance to pluck or tread upon the blossom, a bruised perfume clings to his hands and feet so poignant and so delicious that he cannot forget it, and retraces his steps, like a man enchanted, trying to discover the unnoticed imperceptible plant. The day came when the simple grace of Madame Scarron, her

pure religious charm, seduced the King. And Ahasuérus said to Esther—

> "Je ne trouve qu'en vous je ne sais quelle grâce
> Qui me charme toujours et jamais ne me lasse;
> De l'aimable vertu doux et puissants attraits!
> Tout respire en Esther l'innocence et la paix;
> Du chagrin le plus noir elle écarte les ombres
> Et fait des jours sereins de mes jours les plus sombres."

Du chagrin le plus noir! Did Racine, in his transparent allegory, allude to the real crime of *l'altière Vashti?* Did he suspect the tragic mystery of the great poison case?

> "Tout ce que ce palais renferme de mystères . . .
> Le Roi d'un noir chagrin parait enveloppé . . ."

The King loved decency; we can imagine with what feelings he learned the folly, the vulgar charlatanry, the crimes of that unspeakable affair. He found a new charm in order, in honour. He let Madame Scarron reconcile him to the affectionate, stupid Queen. Madame Scarron was older than either Queen or King—three years older than the King. She appeared an ingenuous angel, of a certain age. Her beauty had not survived the attacks of middle life, but she had preserved her tranquil grace, "une grâce incomparable à tout." To guide, to inspire, was a passion with Madame Scarron. With her eternal black lace mantilla, drooping round her charming faded brow, she was happy enough between the King and Queen, till 1683. Then the Queen died. And the King married Madame Scarron.

'Dieu tient le cœur des rois entre ses mains puissantes,
Il fait que tout prospère aux âmes innocentes
Tandis qu'en ses projets l'orgueilleux est trompé.
De mes faibles attraits le Roi parut frappé.
Il m'observa longtemps dans un sombre silence
Et le ciel, qui pour moi fit pencher la balance,
Dans ce temps-là, sans doute, agissait sur son cœur.
Enfin, avec des yeux où régnait la douceur.
'Soyez Reine!' fit-il."

All that was four long years before the King's espoused saint met Fénelon. The clock had stopped in that hour of secret glory (for the marriage was never declared) and thenceforth nothing changed. Esther learned the tedium of exalted station. "Avant d'être à la Cour," she said to her girls at Saint-Cyr, "je n'avais jamais connu l'ennui. Mais j'en ai bien tâté depuis! Et malgré toute ma raison, je crois que je n'y pourrais jamais résister si je ne pensais que c'est là que Dieu me veut." Her duty henceforth was, as she said, "to amuse the unamusable."

No fate could have been more irksome to poor Madame Scarron. Her inconstancy, or rather her incoherency, her lack of perseverance was proverbial.

"Elle n'avait de suite en rien que par contrainte et par force. Son goût étoit de voltiger en connoissances et en amis comme en amusements—qu'elle ne pût guère varier depuis qu'elle se vit reine. Aisément engouée, elle l'était à l'excès; aussi facilement déprise, elle se dégoûtoit de même—ce qui plaisoit hier, était un démérite aujourd'hui." (Saint-Simon, t. xiii. ch. I.)

Imagine this light fragile creature, of such a prodigious natural instability, doomed for thirty years to the regularity of a treadmill! No wonder that one day she wrote to Madame de Maisonfort: "Ne voyez-vous pas que je meurs de tristesse, dans une fortune qu'on aurait eu peine à imaginer?"

In the first throes of this fever of ennui, she attached herself desperately to the Abbé de Fénelon, exchanging with him volumes of correspondence on the spiritual life. At one moment she thought of making him her confessor. But the strain of practical sense in her reacted, and she chose, not the saint, but an orthodox theologian, the Bishop of Chartres, whilst reserving to Fénelon the privilege of a mystical confidence. One day she prayed him to send her a list of her faults. Fénelon replied: "Quand vous commencez à trouver quelque faible dans les gens que vous avez espéré de trouver parfaits, vous vous en dégoûtez trop vite, et vous poussez trop loin le dégoût."

V

The Beauvilliers and their coterie divided their spiritual allegiance between Fénelon and a certain pious widow nearing forty, named Madame Guyon. The Duchess of Béthune-Charost had known her for many years, and was the most fervent of her disciples. A little book of Madame Guyon's, the *Moyen court et facile de faire oraison*, recently

published, answered so closely to the inmost thoughts of the Beauvilliers and the Chevreuse that the mystical authoress became the oracle of their circle.

Jeanne-Marie Bouvières de la Mothe was a native of Montargis-en-Gatinois, where there was a Royal château (the dower house of the King's sister-in-law) and a famous convent of the Visitandines, where the eight demoiselles de Beauvilliers were at school; so that a double current ran between the little town and the Court. Montargis stands in a moist and wooded stretch of country, north-east of Orleans and south of Fontainebleau, within reach of Paris; and often Madame de Béthune-Charost would leave her country house at Beynes for a season there of deeper retreat or seclusion. And there Jeanne de la Mothe, when a mystical child of fifteen (the dreamiest of mortals, ever lost in some romance of chivalry or more romantic prayer), had given her innocent hand in marriage to gouty M. Guyon, twenty years older than herself, the son of the great contractor who had made both fame and fortune in cutting the canal of Briare. As the years drew on she nursed him with angelic patience, bore him five children, and learned the nothingness of earthly joys. "Le mariage a été pour moi en toute manière un très rude sacrifice," she wrote in her biography. And she sought to console her heart with the Love of God. But she knocked and it was not opened unto her.

The Duchess of Béthune-Charost had been the first to explain to the youthful Madame Guyon the secret key to our interior Paradise—"l'oraison parfaite."[1] Next a cousin of hers—a missionary home from Cochin China—("for in her father's family there were as many saints as there were persons")—explained to her the practice of that inner rapture.

"J'étais surprise de ce qu'il me disait qu'il ne pensait à rien dans l'oraison. Nous disions ensemble l'office de la Sainte Vierge; souvent il s'arrêtait tout court, parceque la violence de l'attrait lui fermait la bouche; et alors il cessait les prières vocales. Je ne savais pas encore que c'était cela."

At last one day a monk, to whom she spoke of her barrenness in prayer, answered: "It is, Madame, because you seek *without* that which exists *within*. Accustom yourself to look for God in your heart, and you will find Him!" The words, she said, transpierced her like an arrow, and thenceforth she lived in a condition of orison. At Montargis, in her drawing-room, while she played piquet with her old husband, the inner fire—the Fire of Pascal—burned and lit up her soul. . . .

When she was twenty-eight, in 1676, her husband died. The young widow of twenty-eight, nobly born, attractive, rich, suffered a time of loss and loneliness. And then again the mysterious instinct of the spiritual life surged anew in her soul, rushed

[1] There is an excellent chapter on Madame Guyon in M. Jules Lemaître's *Life of Fénelon.*

over her like a flood, sweeping away the landmarks of her usual days. Children, fortune, friends were nothing to her—"et toutes les créatures humaines moins qu'un mouchoir." Nothing was dear or valuable save the will of God, and the sweet, incredulous, imperilled souls of the unfaithful. She settled her estates upon her children, reserving for herself a small life-interest, and left her house in 1680 on a missionary journey to Geneva. There she founded for the new-converted a refuge not unlike the Nouvelles-Catholiques of Paris. At Gex she joined a certain Barnabite priest, as sincere and as unbalanced as herself, whom she had met on one occasion, some nine years before, at Montargis, and who then had made the strangest, the strongest impression on her sensitive soul. And when she found herself anew in the presence of this Père La Combe, Madame Guyon discovered herself to possess a new, a singular, an unsuspected faculty—the barriers that separate mortal souls were swept away, an inner grace flowed constantly from her to him, from him to her, and there was established that marvellous gift of interior communication—a sort of spiritual thought-transference or telepathy—which, in all times and faiths, has been the property of certain mystics. M. Lemaître quotes from the *Life of Madame Guyon* an eloquent passage—an admirable passage—

"Je m'aperçus peu à peu que, lorsque on faisait entrer le P. La Combe, ou pour me confesser, ou pour

me communier, je ne pouvais plus lui parler et qu'il se faisait à son égard dans mon fond le même silence qui se faisait à l'égard de Dieu. Je compris que Dieu me voulait apprendre que les hommes pouvaient dès cette vie apprendre le langage des anges. Peu à peu je fus réduite à ne lui parler qu'en silence; ce fut là que nous nous entendions en Dieu d'une manière ineffable et toute divine. Nos cœurs se parlaient et se communiquaient une grâce qui ne se peut dire. Ce fut un pays tout nouveau pour lui et pour moi; mais si divin que je ne le puis exprimer."

The rare critical sense of M. Lemaître was well employed in discovering and setting in its proper light this choice and singular expression of a mystical state, which is a reality, if an extraordinary and abnormal reality. But I cannot follow the great French critic in his interpretation of these lines. He compares Madame Guyon and the P. La Combe to Musset and George Sand! He explains everything on the supposition that they were in love with each other. Madame Guyon, I think, would answer him in the words of Spinoza: The Love of Heaven is no more like the love of earth than the constellation of the Great Bear resembles the beast that goes lumping in the mountain woods!

When she met the P. La Combe Madame Guyon was three-and-thirty years of age. She had a small slight figure, very little hands (and, saint as she was, she loved to go ungloved), and great eyes that burned with an extraordinary fire. There is a

description of her by the Père Paulin d'Amade—her impassionate voice, her trembling lips, her face rosy, her body quivering with suppressed emotion—

> "Elle me dit: 'qu'elle cherchait et qu'elle voulait des cœurs'—ce qu'elle répéta plusieurs fois sans dire autre chose."

Although the small-pox had somewhat tarnished the whiteness of her skin, she was a charming woman, singularly alluring and seducing, because of a certain plaintive innocence strangely mingled with imaginative powers. She moved among her bishops, priests, and Barnabites like an image of the child-Christ among the doctors. Heedless, unworldly, indiscreet, and pure, wherever she went men gossiped, supposed the worst, but never, then or later were able to prove aught save the best, and the Church (which in later days condemned her doctrine) finally approved her spotless life.

She returned to Paris in 1687. At that time the Spanish heresy of Molinos disquieted the official guardians of the Church. Madame Guyon, with her mystical raptures, her desire to rise unto the presence of the Eternal "comme il était avant la création du monde," appeared suspect to the Archbishop of Paris. Perhaps a new variety of Protestant, perhaps a Gnostic, she was not the sort of Catholic to be encouraged. Father La Combe was arrested in October 1687, and in January 1688

Madame Guyon was imprisoned in the rue Saint-Antoine, in the Convent of the Visitation.

Her wild yet grave sweetness, as of a saintly Muse, endeared her to the nuns, her gaolers. They did not cease to vaunt her piety, her innocent gentleness, and the penetrating unction of her prayer. Madame Guyon was a magnetic lady—"traînant tous les cœurs après soi." Virtue seemed to go out of her. And one day the Duke of Chevreuse said to Bossuet: "And really, when you are in the presence of Madame Guyon, do you never feel anything stir in you? not a deep interior commotion?"

Her strange persuasive magic touched not only the nuns but the visitors in the rue Saint-Antoine, M. et Madame de Chevreuse, the Beauvilliers, the Duchess of Béthune-Charost, and Madame de Miramion, that saint uncanonised. So that Madame de Maintenon heard on all sides of the genius and the merit of a woman whose sweet indifference and rapt serenity she vainly supposed akin to her own disenchantment. Something similar in their early history touched her fancy. She was pleased also to show the weight and value of her influence. She threw herself into the business of liberating the captive saint, so that, after eight months' imprisonment, in the middle of September 1688, all doors flew open; Madame Guyon was released. Madame de Béthune-Charost invited her more than once to her country house at Beynes, near Versailles, and it was there, one day towards the autumn-feast of St.

Francis that Fénelon met the lady, with whose gifts and whose misfortunes he was already acquainted.

VI

On that October afternoon Fénelon encountered Madame Guyon, much as a wary family physician meets at the bedside of a valued patient the famous consulting surgeon whom he imagines half a genius and half, perhaps, a quack. He was probably little reassured by her charms and her seduction, having himself the utmost degree of personal magic, and using it with all and sundry, with master and man, as unconsciously as a flower disengages its perfume. He may have mistrusted a rival enchantment. He was not reassured when the delicate emotional woman, who rose at his approach, suddenly faltered, and sank fainting into the arms of the pious duchesses attendant, overcome by one of her mysterious and mystical "plenitudes." . . . Later she told him, as doubtless she confided to her friends, how, eight years before, she had seen the soul of Fénelon in a dream—as a wonderful bird—and, again, as a fountain surging through a basin of ice, as something unutterable and vague appealing to her, destined for her, drawing her with a supersensual attraction; something which hitherto she had vainly sought in all her travels. And the first glance at Fénelon's face had warned her: "It is

he!" . . . The devoted ladies led her aside, loosed the stiff-laced bodice that her beating heart had nearly burst. After a while she returned, but at the sight of her new friend the painful rapture returned, and she exclaimed in an ecstasy—

"My son! My spiritual son! Thou art my well-belovèd son, in whom I am well pleased!"

Now, if Madame Guyon was just forty, Fénelon was already thirty-seven, an ecclesiastic, a tall dark lean commanding figure, imposing, attractive, with "une autorité de prophète," said Saint-Simon, "une domination sous sa douceur qui ne voulait point de résistance." Such an address filled him with amused curiosity rather than respect. Madame Guyon felt that he did not take her seriously. In a fragment of autobiography published by M. Maurice Masson in his valuable volume, she dwells upon this lack of response—

"Je sentais intérieurement que cette première entrevue ne le satisfaisait point, qu'il ne me goûtait pas; et j'éprouvais un je ne sais quoi qui me faisait tendre à verser mon cœur dans le sien, mais je ne trouvais pas de correspondance, ce qui me faisait beaucoup souffrir. La nuit je souffrais extrêmement à son occasion. Nous fîmes ensemble trois lieues en carosse (de Beynes à Paris) et cela s'éclairait un peu, mais il n'était pas encore comme je le souhaitais. Je souffris huit jours entiers, après quoi je me trouvais unie à lui sans obstacle, d'une manière très pure et ineffable. . . . Ces premiers jours, après notre entrevue à Beynes, je souffris beaucoup,

car je trouvais comme un chaos entre lui et moi. Mais ensuite j'éprouvais qu'il se faisait un écoulement presque continuel de Dieu dans mon âme, et de mon âme dans la sienne, comme ces cascades qui tombent d'un bassin dans un autre." [1]

While Madame Guyon spent eight days of bewildered disappointment, Fénelon passed from a movement of amused distrust to a sense of sympathy and veneration. He was well read in the mystics—he knew them all, Platonists and neo-Platonists, Gnostics, and canonised Saints—Theresa, Catherine, Juan-de-la-Cruz and François de Sales. But in his person he had not experienced religion. He believed; but he lacked Pascal's joy, his triumphant liberation of soul, or "l'intime assurance" of a Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. That spirituality of his, so deep and yet so diffident, was reasoned rather than instinctive. And yet his cold and suave address masked a soul impatient for the love of God. The fainting prophetess before him, whose impulsive manners and extravagant speeches hurt the native discretion of his taste, struck in him a deeper and more intimate vibration, because she had felt and seen and known those things which he surmised afar off with a passionate longing. So a Curie or a Myers might examine an Eusapia. A few years later, when the Church accused Fénelon of a complicity in Madame Guyon's heresy, he was to reply—

[1] Maurice Masson, *Fénelon et Madam Guyon: Documents nouveaux et inédits.* Hachette, 1907.

"J'ai cru Madame Guyon une très sainte personne, qui avait une lumière fort particulière *par expérience*, sur la vie intérieure. Je la crus fort expérimentée et éclairée quoique elle fut très ignorante. Je crus apprendre plus d'elle *en examinant ses expériences*, que je n'eusse pu faire en consultant des personnes fort sages, mais sans expérience pour la pratique."

Madame Guyon was rather a poet than a visionary. Her prose is full of images. She sees the soul of Fénelon "comme une eau vivante et profonde quoique toute entourée de glace"; she sees the grace of God flooding her innermost being, and overbrimming thence in dropping plenitude on to the soul of Fénelon, "like the waters of the fountains at Versailles"; but in these metaphors the poignant thing is, not the image but the moral fact which they explain. She had a certain gentle scorn for the imaginative ecstasies of Port Royal: those dreamers of dreams, those flagellants and visionaries appeared to the thrilling yet tranquil lady as pilgrims on the stair which leads to that mute, mystic Upper Room wherein the blest perpetually behold the Fount of the Divine in perfect quiet. "Les âmes de foi," she wrote, "ne sont nullement imaginatives, n'ayant rien dans la tête et tout se passant au-dedans. Elles sont parfaitement dégagées des fantômes et espèces, étant purifiées dans une abstraction bien au-delà, bien au-delà des représentations." We might apply to her the words which Marot used of another mystic, the

Queen of Navarre: "Esprit ravy, abstraict, et extatique."

In reading the works of Madame Guyon, we must never forget that her mind's eye perceived existence on two planes. Above reached Eternity, simultaneous, infinite; below, the world of Life and Time, where things pass in succession. To her, as to Fénelon, Eternity is not a mere persistence in time after the dissolution of the body. It has no relation to time; it is a relation to the Divine Being. Eternity has to do, not with *existentia*, but with *essentia*—it is not a continuance, but a manner of life—something entering into our existence and transforming it, which can be realised here and now as well as at any other time or place. Sometimes, rapt out of its mortal sphere, the human soul may rise for the twinkling of an eye into the spirit of Eternity, and that undying moment is more precious than all our science, all our righteousness; its value (as compared with theirs) being priceless, even as diamonds are, compared with copper coins. If one pure diamond, inestimable, be ours, what does it matter, though we own, or owe, a countless multitude of farthings? If we possess the Koh-i-noor, why strive to increase our wealth in pence and halfpence? The importance of sin is diminished to the mystic, who half-believes that Evil (which lies outside the Eternal Essence) has no real existence, deeming our faults mere phenomena, mists which dissolve at sunrise. Our errors of omission and

commission seem things of small importance to the soul which longs (as Madame Guyon says in her *Torrents Spirituels*) to enter the presence of Deity, and behold Him as He was before the creation of the world and man.

And this, no doubt, is a dangerous doctrine, which may seem to abolish morality (there is indeed little connection between faith and morality); but it is the instinctive doctrine of saints. The Penitent Thief and Mary Magdalene bear witness thereunto.

We have sometimes wondered that no philosopher has sought to borrow some such theory to explain the hauntings and hoverings of ghosts. The Woman in White for ever wailing in her corridor, the pale spectre carrying her candle these many hundred years, are apparitions puerile and appalling. But suppose that, in some extreme tension of passion or fear or prayer, these souls escaped once, at a bound, into Eternity and remained there an instant —as though sucked up into a superior atmosphere— the mechanical action which they were performing at that stupendous moment is accomplished once and for ever, not in a succession of moments, but in the vast simultaneity of that which is beyond the realm of time. A thousand years to them are as a day, and they carry their candle for ever, since their state knows not, in its unfading permanence, the distinction of yesterday and to-morrow.

VII

Saint-Simon, so shrewd, so prejudiced, sometimes so ill-informed, knew nothing of this initial hesitation in the friendship of Fénelon and Madame Guyon. "Il la vit; leur esprit se plut l'un à l'autre; leur sublime s'amalgama." And, in fact, a few weeks after their first encounter, Fénelon and Madame Guyon were spiritual confederates. Their correspondence (published by M. Maurice Masson in 1907) is curiously, intensely interesting—at least to the student of mystical psychology—and shows the singular interpenetration of their souls.

They dreamed together of a Love of God surpassing the love of individuals—an idea, a sentiment, that we can understand only by resolutely eliminating all kinds of passion, every sort of image: "On aime d'autant plus alors qu'on aime sans sentir." They imagined a religion which should be a continual relation between Man and the Infinite, and which consisted less in conceiving their God as present, than in apprehending Him as eternal; and they felt their own nothingness compared to that Eternity: "Je ne suis qu'un, ajouté à un autre qui est infiniment plus *Un* que moi!" The God that distributes pains and pleasures, rewards and recompenses—Pascal's God!—appeared to them as the idol of sorcerers. All *they* asked was to follow the Will of the Divine as passively, as mutely, as

the rain that falls, and is engulfed into the bosom of the sea. Their aim was to expel all passion of self-interest, all hope of personal gain in this world or the next, and to live, welcoming every event, with a mind serene in the pure vision of Truth—

"Alors on aime Dieu au milieu des peines, de manière qu'on ne l'aimeroit pas davantage quand même il combleroit l'âme de consolation. Ni la crainte des châtiments, ni le désir des récompenses n'ont plus de part à cet amour. On n'aime plus Dieu, ni pour le mérite, ni pour la perfection, ni pour le bonheur qu'on doit trouver en l'aimant. On l'aimeroit autant quand même—par supposition impossible—il devroit ignorer qu'on l'aime, et qu'il voudroit rendre éternellement malheureux ceux qui l'auront aimé."[1]

There, in the words of Fénelon, is all the heresy of Fénelon.

As an island is surrounded by water, as night surrounds the stars and air the globe, so beyond the narrow region of the known there stretches an illimitable space of darkness and silence. All minds know that it is there; to some it is a quiet background to the busy scene of life; to some the invisible tract has its chart of faith or dogma. But there are men to whom that vast and dark Unknown is more present than the small, shining certainty of the Universe; they are sucked into the eddy of its vastness and its darkness. Souls such as these are

[1] *Explication des Maximes des Saints.*

never quite at home in life. The Infinite has enchanted them; they are drawn by the attraction of the abyss.

Mysticism allures in various ways a Pascal and a Fénelon; it has different magnets for the passionate heart, the broken and humbled will, the heated fancy, the indignant spirit wroth with the world and all its hardness—and draws no less the reasoning and metaphysical mind, repelled by dogma, yet desirous of the Deity. The mystics of all times have attempted to answer questions which even to-day the theologians elude:[1] "Whence comes Evil?" Evil, they reply, does not exist, was never made by God, is but the blanks and spaces in a creation still imperfect. "Why are men created responsible beings without their own consent?" Terrible question, which caused such anguish to the Jansenists! The mystic answers—if he be truthful and logical—that our bodies are not created by a Divine Act, that we are not eternally responsible for their sins. They are but the temporary expression of our souls . . . scraps of paper on which the poem is jotted down; once we have printed the poem in eternity, the scrap of paper may be thrown away, with all its faults and errors. . . . "How can God heed our action if He be omnipotent? If omnipotent, how tolerant of evil? If permitting evil, suffering, sin and Hell, how then All-loving? If All-loving, how just?" These

[1] See Newman *Grammar of Assent*, p. 210.

questions are all answered by the mystical conception of God as a Divine Passivity, a Fund of Existence, nourishing all. "A Godhead" (as Eckhart says) "above God. A Godhead that neither moves nor works: a simple Stillness; an eternal Silence; the Utmost Term; the simple darkness of the silent Waste"—the Movement, ever eddying, behind all transitory Forms.

Fénelon and Madame Guyon did not plumb quite to this giddy depth the bottomless chasm of the interior abyss, but they held all the essential tenets of the mystics; and firstly, the supple dependence on the Will of the Unknown: "Vouloir tout, vouloir rien. . . . Aller par le non-voir. . . . Marcher comme Abraham, sans savoir où." They believed in "a fathomless annihilation of self," holding that, even as waters rush up a tube from which the air is expelled, so, as Self evaporates, its place is filled by God—and many pages of their letters are concerned with the discipline of this "désappropriation." "On ne se vide de soi qu'à mesure, qu'on se remplit de Dieu," writes Fénelon to Madame Guyon[1] in a singular letter wherein he recapitulates all the stations of the spiritual progress—

1st. Recollection and simple prayer—tending to a quiet rapture "par laquelle on tend à cette simplicité et à cette mort des sens extérieurs."

2nd. Passive Faith ("on laisse l'Esprit de grâce amortir peu à peu les goûts sensibles et intérieurs

[1] Masson, *Fénelon et Mme. Guyon*, pp. 240–246.

qu'on avait eu jusqu'alors pour les vertus")—or, as Nietzsche would say: "We live on the other side of Good and Evil."

3rd. Naked Faith—stript of all images, sensations, sentiments and perceptions: God is no longer perceptible to reason or feeling . . we walk in the night.

4th. Death l'âme expire enfin . . . elle est comme un corps mort, insensible à tout, qui ne résiste à rien, et que rien n'offense).

5th. Resurrection. Life begins to stir in the dead soul (but not *our* life), the Life Everlasting.

6th. Transfiguration (l'âme est transformée parce que la vie et la volonté de Dieu sont à la place de la sienne propre).

This is the "Vie ressuscitée" which Madame Guyon celebrates in her manual of the mystical life: *Les Torrents.*

The first commandment of this new spirituality was to have no commandments. "I like your rule" (Madame Guyon writes to Fénelon) "of taking no thought for yourself, and asking nothing . . . but I should like still better that you made *no law unto yourself at all;* following, in all simplicity and suppleness, the impulsion given from within. . . . *Ce n'est plus la vertu que nous devons envisager en quoi que ce soit—cela n'est plus pour nous—mais la volonté de Dieu, qui est au-dessus de toutes*[1] *les vertus.*"

[1] Masson, 333.

No commandments; one prayer, three words long: *Fiat voluntas tua!* Thy Will be done; and one belief: that Faith leads us blindly upwards to absorption in the perfect unity—that is, God. Such was the Nirvana of these seventeenth-century Theosophists. It was not a personal delight that they expected in their divine Abyss; it was the sense of dissolution in the Deity—to lose oneself, to drown, extinguish, escape from the narrow imprisoning ego, like a drop of rain absorbed in the sea! And as God, at an infinite depth, is the secret source of everything, so (they said) in the Abyss all souls are One: "Les âmes n'ont rien de distinct, et cette distinction est entièrement opposée à la foi." . . . "Les esprits bienheureux se répandent ensemble et se pénètrent les uns les autres. C'est *la Communion des Saints*."[1] Thus wrote to Fénelon his friend, Madame Guyon.

Condemned by the Church (perhaps not unwisely) as a most dangerous heresy; ridiculed without mercy by Voltaire and the encyclopædists of the eighteenth century; the doctrines of Madame Guyon are not without their apologists to-day. The philosophers of France (converging from points so far asunder as the idealism of M. Bergson and the monist psychology of M. Georges Dumas, agree in considering her as one of the most original and philosophical intelligences of her times. And the

[1] Masson, 320.

Torrents—the most confused and excessive of her writings—has found its audience, fit though few.

VIII

The New Spirituality became the secret gospel of the pious dukes and duchesses grouped round Madame de Béthune-Charost; seduced, among others, Madame de Maintenon, and penetrated her College of Saint-Cyr. Madame Guyon had there a cousin—Madame de la Maisonfort—a charming young canoness of three- or four-and-twenty, of an ancient and noble family in Berry. About the end of 1698 this young lady came to live at Saint-Cyr, where she was employed in teaching "elle eut bientôt toute autorité dans la maison avec Madame de Brinon qui en étoit supérieure." [1] Madame de la Maisonfort was naturally an ardent Guyonite, and she was one of the gifted penitents of the Abbé de Fénelon. In a short time their views and doctrines penetrated all the school—

"Presque toute la maison devint Quiétiste sans le savoir. On ne parlait plus que d'amour pur de Dieu, d'abandon, de sainte indifférence et de simplicité. Cette dernière vertu servait de voile à la recherche de toutes les petites satisfactions personnelles. On prenait ses aises et ses commodités avec la sainte liberté des enfants de Dieu. On ne

[1] *Notes d'un Contemporain.* See E. Griselle, *Fénelon: Documents Historiques*, 245.

s'embarassait de rien—pas même de son salut. . . . Jusqu'au sœurs converses et aux servantes, il n'était plus question que de pur amour!"[1]

And the lay sisters forgot to sweep their corridors in order to read the tracts of Madame Guyon; so at least averred that refractory spirit of a schoolmistress, Madame Catherine de Pérou, a lady of Saint-Cyr, seven times Superior of the house.

It is singular to find a School for Girls at the very centre of a puissant state, but so it was in France towards 1689, when the same bevy of noble maidens who confessed their sins to Fénelon, and raved of Madame Guyon, played Racine's new *Mystery of Esther* before the Court, with unparalleled success. *Esther* was a sensitive tentacle extended—a feeler timidly stretched—to explore the state of opinion as to a public declaration of the King's secret marriage, which seemed, at one time, so probable that Louvois threw himself at Louis' feet and swore that, if such a thing happened, he, for one, would not survive so great a degradation of the throne. Saint-Simon declares that Fénelon, consulted, advised the King *not* to divulge his union, and thus made an enemy of his friend, the unacknowledged Queen. Saint-Simon is a gossip in the same degree that he is an historian of genius. Yet, if the King *did* consult Fénelon, such would doubtless have been his answer. Fénelon was the

[1] Lavallée, *Mme. de Maintenon et Saint-Cyr*, p. 190.

near and intimate friend of Madame de Maintenon, but he was an aristocrat to the very marrow of the soul; he could not have envisaged Scarron's widow as the Queen of France.

There were also other reasons for a loosening of the ties between Fénelon and the uncrowned Queen; for uncrowned she remained; the French Ahasuerus never said to his married Esther: "Soyez Reine."

She was the witness, the somewhat disconcerted witness, of the wave of transport, of fervour, which lifted so high (almost out of her reach) her two favourites, the priest and the prophetess. Their names and their precepts were always in her ears; she herself, the foundress, was second to Madame Guyon at Saint-Cyr.

Perhaps an unconscious jealousy touched the still crownless Queen of Versailles. Fénelon was now the idol of the court, and Madame Guyon, at Marly, was Dame Oracle. Pious ladies read her commentaries to their husbands or their lovers; and chanted *Le tout de Dieu et le rien de l'homme* to the music of *La jeune Iris me fait aimer ses chaînes*—even as their great-grandmothers had sung the Psalms of Marot to their lutes. Madame de Maintenon herself read the *Moyen Court* to the King. But the King said it was all moonshine: "Il me dit que c'étaient des rêveries. Il n'est pas assez avancé dans la piété pour goûter cette perfection."

Madame de Maintenon began, indeed, to have doubts as to the orthodoxy of this revelation. She wrote to Madame de St. Géran—

"Il y a des endroits obscurs, il y en a d'édifiants, il y en a que je n'approuve en aucune manière. L'Abbé de Fénelon m'avait dit que le *Moyen Court* contenait les mystères de la plus sublime dévotion, à quelques petites expressions près, qui se trouvent dans les écrits des mystiques."

These "quelques petites expressions" disquieted Madame de Maintenon. She was always anxious about her spiritual health. She suffered from a hypochondria of the soul, feeling herself in the situation of a woman, apparently cured of an early consumption, who cannot forget the taint of tuberculosis in her blood, and trembles at every cough or hectic flush. Madame de Maintenon remembered with dismay her Huguenot descent, her heretic breeding.

IX

At this moment Fénelon was, spiritually, the most influential man in France. He had no official position. With the two thousand francs a year of his Abbey of Saint-Valéry he lived in an elegant parsimony that never disturbed him. He was accustomed to being poor, and also to being among the first in any company. Versailles did not dazzle

him; he had vast halls at Fénelon; and his old soutane did not distress him—he had been reared among the worn tapestries, the crumbling furniture, of his "poor Ithaca" by the Dordogne.

But the greatest in France hung on his lips. "Do you remember when you used to beg me to read out to you the pious writings of M. de Fénelon?" wrote Madame de Maintenon to the King in later days, when she thought him growing lukewarm in religion. . . . Such heights are dizzy. Madame de Maintenon and M. de Meaux began to fear a certain vertigo for Fénelon. "Il faut le désengouer de Madame Guyon" ("We must disenchant him"), said the great lady. A vague jealousy, a dim suspicion, began also, about this time, to disturb the benignant tranquillity of Bossuet. Had the charming Abbé from Gascony conceived the bold, the secret, dream of keeping the conscience of the court? While graciously indifferent to apparent success, was he concealing the sceptre of an occult supremacy? What were the doctrines he diffused? Bossuet had, for heresy, the scent of one of the hounds of the Lord, ever on the track.

At this date, no ill-will moved either the bishop or the lady—a certain alarm, at most, and disapproval—a desire to withdraw their gifted *protégé* from the clutches of a spiritual siren—to find him other employment—to turn his attention to more salutary quarters. It began to be rumoured about the court that M. de Fénelon would probably be

appointed governor to the grandchildren of Louis XIV. For ten years Bossuet had been their father's tutor—had made nothing much of his young prince—had certainly reaped no great advantage for himself—but remembered the post as honourable and occupying, such as his friend might fill. Neither the royal governor of yesterday nor Madame de Maintenon, that royal governess, could imagine the mood of prayer, passion, poetry—the wild chimeras, the utopian charity—which could fill the heart of a Fénelon or a Madame Guyon when they contemplated the chance of forming a future for France! A Pascal might have understood them.

"On a souvent ouï dire à M. Pascal" (reports Nicole) "que nul emploi du monde ne lui eut plus agréé que celui d'instituteur de l'héritier présomptif de la couronne de France, et qu'il aurait volontiers sacrifié sa vie pour une chose si importante."

It was in this world of hope and prayer that Fénelon and his flock contemplated such a possibility. The little Prince, "le petit Prince," was one of the great hopes of the Guyonites. "I assure you in God," wrote Madame Guyon, "you will be there, not only for the little Prince, but for the greatest Prince of all—Christ Jesus."

It was to Fénelon that the prophetess turned for help in her schemes of regeneration. With his aid she hoped to see on the horizon the dawn of a renewal for France. That year, while the young ladies at

Saint-Cyr were playing *Esther*, Racine was busy upon another play, a great moral drama or pæan, telling how Israel was saved from the pit of corruption by a child. A little child should lead the nation —*parvulus puer*—a boy reared in the Temple apart from the vanity of courts. Their Joas, their Eliacin, was the son of the stupid Dauphin, a violent sensitive little lad of seven, on whom centred the hopes of such as dared to hope for France—

> "Te duce, si qua manent, sceleris vestigia nostri
> Inrita perpetua solvent formidine terras . . .
> Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo."

In August 1689 Fénelon was appointed tutor to this young prince, the Duke of Burgundy. Henceforth his life, his letters, his books, his heart, will be full of P. P.—petit-Prince—his aim, his hope, his charge. Beauvilliers was governor to the royal child, and filled his household with officers of pious merit. In their midst, his pupil at his knees, Fénelon, with his friend the Abbé de Langeron, dwelt for eight years, and touched the dream of his life. For he hoped to save France and to form a new Saint-Louis—a "Roi-philosophe," as he declares in *Télémaque*. His idea of a Revolution was to change the heart of the King. He had this much of the Quietist in him that he distrusted all exterior reform, for the only activity in which he believed was that which wells up unconsciously from the depths of our nature. He would have said with Madame Guyon : "Toute vertu qui n'est pas donnée

M 2

par le dedans est un manque de vertu." And from the centre of the throne, from the heart of a king, he hoped to renew the land of France, ruined by wars of magnificence, by the King's debts, the corruption of government, and the ceaseless, exhausting, centripetal suction of Versailles.

X

Madame de Maintenon was still a governess at heart—a governess, anxious, indignant, at the spread of dangerous opinions in her school. She confided her doubts and fears to her new confessor, the Bishop of Chartres; and, suddenly taking fire with fresh alarms, laid before him the several volumes of her spiritual correspondence with Fénelon.

The Bishop was a pupil of Saint-Sulpice, and inclined to deal lightly with his condisciple; he laid at first but little stress on the mysticism of Fénelon, but found in Madame Guyon's writings more than one passage which appeared to echo the Quietist heresy of Molinos, the Spaniard. The days of Madame Guyon's glory were departed. For one thing, the magnetic lady was no longer on the scene; she had married a little daughter of hers, a girl of thirteen, to the Duchess of Béthune's brother; and she had gone to live in the country with her childish marchioness. Her charming contact being so far

removed, her ideas might safely have been left to evaporate, but Madame de Maintenon, in her alarm, was for extirpating heresy root and branch; and a commission of ecclesiastics was appointed to examine the theories of Madame Guyon.

We have compared Fénelon's first attitude towards Madame Guyon to that of an experienced doctor confronted with a surgeon whom he half suspects of quackery, but of whose genius he is rapidly persuaded. Imagine the same physician, face to face with a lean Pastorian, down-at-heel, out-at-elbows, modest, and fierce; you have a picture of Fénelon, *vis-à-vis* of the suspicious Bishop of Chartres. The mystic on this occasion showed a certain superficiality in underrating the worth of his opponent, whose appearance belied him. Godet, Bishop of Chartres (such as Saint-Simon paints him in one of his admirable portraits), was not the pedant proclaimed by an exterior of which Fénelon was the dupe.

"Il le crut tel à sa longue figure malpropre, décharnée, toute Sulpicienne. Un air cru, simple, un aspect niais, et sans liaison qu'avec de plats prêtres; en un mot il le prit pour un homme sans monde, sans talent, de peu d'esprit et court de savoir. . . . Il était pourtant fort savant et surtout profond théologien. Il y joignait beaucoup d'esprit; il avait de la douceur, de la fermeté, même des grâces."

He had already whistled Madame de Maintenon

from the brilliant Fénelon; the day when he arraigned and disgraced Madame Guyon was ominous for her spiritual friend.

Yet, at first, the distress of Madame Guyon left Fénelon unharmed. Proceedings were taken against the prophetess in 1693; not until 1695 was Fénelon disgraced. And had he consented to forsake his Egeria, his fortunes might have remained unimpaired. Godet was a Sulpician, and fain to spare a colleague; while Madame de Maintenon's private letters show a long regard, a lingering tenderness, for Fénelon which accord ill with Saint-Simon's fable of her enmity. She did not hate him. She merely meant to manage him for his own good—to read him such a lesson as would wean him once for all from dangerous ways. As Fénelon wrote to her, more in sorrow than in anger—

"Vous passâtes de l'excès de simplicité et de confiance à un excès d'ombrage et d'effroi. Voilà ce qui a fait tous nos malheurs. Des gens vous firent entendre que je deviendrais peut-être un hérésiarque. . . . Vous n'osâtes suivre votre cœur ni votre lumière. Vous voulûtes (et j'en suis édifié) marcher par la voie la plus sûre, qui est celle de l'autorité."

Unfortunately, Fénelon himself showed no predisposition to this path of submission. A most unclerical independence, an unchristian reluctance to eat his own words or give up his friends at the bidding of authority, made him difficult to influence. A hint from Godet proving insufficient, the orthodox

lady brought up her rearguard, and Bossuet condemned the works of Madame Guyon in April 1695. Bossuet had been the early master of Fénelon, and there is a magic to a reverent heart in the name and the memory of the master of our youth. And yet that reverent heart, as time draws on—widening the abyss that divides successive generations—may grow most painfully awake to the faults in yesterday's oracle. The fame of Bossuet still filled Church and kingdom with an incomparable prestige, while Fénelon saw in keen relief, not only the genius and the noble character of the great bishop, but all that was overweening, pompous, even blatant in that arrogant genius, in that stubborn character.

He knew that his glorious contemporary was little versed in the precepts of the mystics so familiar to his own meditations. Bossuet, whose mind was dogmatic, not curious, had never cared to read St. Francis de Sales, St. Catherine of Siena, Juan de la Cruz, nor any of those earlier dreamers whose mystical imagination outran the regular patrol of his Gallican mind. Yet he had not hesitated to condemn the books of Madame Guyon. Fénelon saw that he blamed in them precepts which are admired in the utterance of canonised saints. Madame Guyon is not alone in thinking that the first rung on Jacob's ladder to Heaven leads us beyond the regions of merit and reward. Throughout the ages of the Church, in every century, from Scotus Erigena to Meister Eckhart, from Joachim

de Flora to the great bishop of Annecy, there have been saints and sages whose religion has accompanied sadly, as in a minor third, the public orthodoxy of Roman doctrine—minds who sought their deity within, and in perception rather than in precept; whose piety has been, not passive perhaps, but quiet; minds whose sense is filled with the eternity of the One-in-all, so full as to outweigh and overmaster their sense of personal immortality; whose devotion to the Holy Spirit has been more conspicuous than their adoration of the Son of Man. And often these are minds of faith and saintliness. . . . The Church has pronounced some of them blessed. Others have been cast to the burning. *Habent fata animae!*

The crime of heresy was still dangerous in the closing years of the seventeenth century. "Let them burn me!" cried Madame Guyon. "Que ma cendre vole!" Fénelon, who had evangelised Poitou, knew to what peril a heretic was exposed. The Dragonnades were barely passed. It was impossible for so chivalrous a soul (whose sense of honour had received no tonsure) to forsake a poor innocent woman whom he believed holy, imprudent, indiscreet—with the double claim of saintliness and helplessness. When Bossuet and Godet asked him to sign their refutation of her errors, he refused his name—

"Me convient-il d'aller accabler une pauvre personne que tant d'autres ont foudroyée, et dont

j'ai été l'ami? . . . Quant à M. de Meaux, je serais ravie d'approuver son livre, comme il le souhaite mais je ne le puis honnêtement, ni en conscience, s'il attaque une personne qui me paraît innocente . . . que j'ai révérée comme une sainte, sur tout ce que j'en ai vu par moi-même." [1]

And again he writes to Madame de Maintenon—

"Je n'ai jamais eu aucun goût naturel pour elle ni pour ses écrits. Je n'ai jamais éprouvé rien d'extraordinaire en elle qui ait pu me prévenir en sa faveur. Il m'a paru qu'elle était naturellement exagérante et peu précautionnée dans ses expériences. Je ne compte pour rien ses prétendues prophéties. . . . Si j'étais capable d'approuver une personne qui enseigne un nouvel évangile, j'aurais horreur de moi-même . . . mais je puis fort innocemment me tromper sur une personne *que je crois sainte*."

And again to Madame de Maintenon in 1697—

"On ne manquera pas de dire que je dois aimer l'Eglise plus que mon amie. . . . Comme s'il s'agissait de l'Eglise dans une affaire où la doctrine est en sûreté! . . . C'est une pauvre femme captive, accablée de douleurs et d'opprobres; personne ne la défend ni ne l'excuse et on a toujours peur!"

From this position he refused to vary. He had been Madame Guyon's friend; he believed her innocent; he did not question the wisdom of his superiors, but he refused to sign a condemnation of her doctrines.

[1] Letter of Fénelon to the Superior of Saint-Sulpice, September 25, 1696.

Meanwhile, the months passed—the months and the years—and Fénelon saw no more of the woman he defended. He had left Paris in August 1689, to enter the palace of Versailles as tutor to the prince; about the same time Madame Guyon had accompanied her daughter to the country place of the Marquis de Vaux. And thence she had been sent to the convent of Meaux, where Bossuet kept her amicably imprisoned, drenching her with orthodoxy, swamping her arguments in the imperious flood of his authority. Madame Guyon appeared delighted to enjoy the instruction of so great a prelate, showed him her manuscripts with the fearless freedom of a pleased child, manifested no resentment at being kept in secret from all correspondence with the outer world, and behaved herself so sweetly that the gaoler-nuns adored her, and Bossuet himself, while censuring her books, gave her a certificate of good conduct and let her out of prison during the summer of 1695. Against his express desire and command, the imprudent woman went at once to Paris, and here she may have seen her friend by stealth; but not more than once or twice, since, within a little while of her arrival, Fénelon's place at court was to know him no more.

XI

The King had never shared the general enthusiasm for Fénelon. He had dubbed him "un esprit

chimérique." In the memoirs of Chancellor d'Aguesseau we learn much concerning the King's distaste for something chivalrous, rare, romantic in the character of Fénelon—"soit que le roi craignît naturellement les esprits d'un ordre supérieur, soit qu'une certaine singularité, quelque chose d'extraordinaire, n'eut pas plu au roi dont le goût se portait de lui-même au simple et à l'uni."

Fénelon, at Versailles, had lived a life apart, sequestered in the fold of his pious flock. He knew the quiet splendour of his powers, the Attic perfection of his sense and style; literature and politics, bathed in the radiance of his religion, filled his mind with projects for the future. Accustomed to the gentle victories of his grace, although he bestirred himself but little, he counted on the future. In 1693 he had been elected a member of the French Academy; he shared with Bossuet the pre-eminence of pious oratory; he was forming his future king and writing *Télémaque;* with Beauvilliers, he meditated plans of national reform.

Once he had written to Madame Guyon: "If they offer me a bishopric, would it be lawful in me to refuse it? I am more useful here." That was some years ago, when there had been some talk of offering Fénelon the bishopric of Poitiers. And now there was talk again of possible promotion. At court, and especially in the "petit troupeau," there were many who speculated on the failing health of the Archbishop of Paris. The King owed some

reward to Fénelon, who, for eight years, had given his time and pains to the training of his *petit-Prince*, without praise or pence, so quietly content that even Beauvilliers, his bosom friend, Minister of finance, never thought of augmenting his resources. A king, in one breath, can reward long arrears of service. It was, however, seeing the terms they were on, scarcely possible to make Fénelon the hierarchic superior of Bossuet; and the bishopric of Meaux lies in the archdiocese of Paris. Besides, Madame de Maintenon, who was marrying a favourite niece into the house of Noailles, desired the archbishopric for the cardinal of that name. And the King had never liked Fénelon. So, in the spring of 1695, he paid his debt by handsomely relegating his grandson's tutor well out of the way among the Protestant and Jansenist Belgians, *extremi hominum*, in the newly annexed diocese of Cambrai.

It was ingenious to make so faithful a servant a prince-archbishop while eliminating a mystic, and to conciliate a hostile province by sending as Proconsul the enchanter and the peacemaker that Fénelon was at heart. By the same stroke, the King removed from the presence of his grandson a tutor whose religious principles appeared at least dubious, and yet, by making an archbishop of the man, extinguished all suggestions that the Prince had had a heretic at his ear. So Fénelon found himself, in the summer of 1695, no longer an unpaid

teacher, but a Prince of the Church. Yet that had been favour: this was disgrace disguised. In the chapel of Saint-Cyr, at the laying-on of hands, the prelate saw himself surrounded by his flock, and Bossuet anointed him. But the archbishop knew what had befallen him, nor needed to point the moral the long faces of his friends.

"La nomination de l'Abbé de Fénelon à Cambrai jeta ses amis dans la consternation; ils prirent cela pour un honnête exil, car ils le destinèrent à Paris et au ministère." So writes the malicious but well-informed observer whose anonymous notes have recently been published by M. Eugène Griselle.[1] . . . Fénelon had thought his life's work lay at court—in the court, not of it—in the school-room of P.P.—among the ladies at Saint-Cyr—in the Beauvilliers' quiet salon "au coin de la petite cheminée de marbre blanc." The secret domination which he had there enjoyed fulfilled the strongest aspiration of his nature. Now, he felt, it was all over!

The sad dignity of his manner showed that he was not the dupe of a title. "M. de Fénelon," writes Madame de Sévigné, "showed some surprise at this present of an archbishopric, and in thanking the King he marked clearly that he could not appreciate the recompense that caused him to absent himself from M. le Duc de Bourgogne. The King

[1] Eugene Griselle, *Fénelon: Études Historiques*. Hachette, 1911.

replied that he had no intention of obliging the prelate to a perpetual residence; but this honourable archbishop replied that the Council of Trent allowed at most some three months in the year for leave of absence, and that only for private and particular affairs. 'There is none,' said the King, 'more important than the education of a prince,' and consented that he should remain nine months of the year at Cambrai and three at Versailles. M. de Fénelon then resigned into the King's hands his one and only Abbey. M. le Tellier, Bishop of Rheims, says that, with M. de Fénelon's opinions, it was the right thing to do, but that, thinking as he himself does, there is no harm in keeping his several benefices."

Fénelon's disinterestedness, always remarkable, was here doubtless heightened by a point of anger: "Pecunia tua tecum sit!" He left the court. With the faithful Langeron he went into exile. He scarcely was installed in his palace of Cambrai when he heard that Madame Guyon had been again arrested, had been conveyed, not to a convent, but to the state prison at Vincennes, where she was closely guarded and examined every day by La Reynie, the lieutenant of police. And the cabal, which had reached her, now took aim at Beauvilliers and at Fénelon himself.

XII

Thus began the lamentable conflict from which no person of this story shall issue without scathe; neither Fénelon, who will lose the favour of both Versailles and Rome (yet who, in his disgrace, by his candour and honour, shall finally win the esteem of his fiercest adversaries), nor Bossuet, whose passion pursued so rudely the error, if it was an error, of a once loved friend; nor Madame de Maintenon, torn between tenderness and scruple, whose lack of constancy caused her to desert a man she honoured and esteemed; nor the King, who in this affair showed himself no less peremptory, harsh, unjust than in the disgrace of Fouquet; nor Madame Guyon, henceforth a captive or an exile till the end of her days. . . .

Madame de Maintenon had her share in the catastrophe. The King did not spare her, as to her blind infatuation for Fénelon, and blamed her for the inconsequence of having let him name as prince-archbishop "un homme qui pouvait former dans la cour un grand parti." It was their one dispute (and it went near to her disgrace) in an intimacy which was to last for thirty years. Madame de Maintenon was in peril! Alarmed beyond expression, the anxious Egeria fell ill, and thought herself indeed at death's door. It was then that the Bishop of Chartres intervened and wrote to the

King: "Rendez vôtre confiance à cette excellente compagne, pleine de l'esprit de Dieu. . . . Je connais le fond de son cœur: Elle ne vous trompera jamais si elle n'est trompée elle-même." And Louis XIV, the irate Ahasuerus, consented to unbend, visited Esther sick, soothed her with his sublime forgiveness, and said like some affable archangel: "Eh bien, Madame, faudra-t-il que nous vous voyions mourir pour cette affaire-là?"[1]

Meanwhile "cette affaire-là" filled all the court, filled France, filled Rome with the bruit of its fray, and La Fontaine was the only man who dared to find the question of the Quietists a nuisance! The seventeenth century had an appetite for theological controversy, a passion for the unity of the Church, which we of a later day may dimly understand by recalling the Russia of the later nineteenth century, where Pobiedonostsef was the Bossuet of Alexander. France was divided as to whether charity should be a pure outgoing of the soul, with no pious afterthought, no care of merit to be earned, or heavenly bliss to be enjoyed (as Fénelon maintained); or whether (as Bossuet held) every action of the Christian should be rooted in the hope of an eternal recompense. "Love God!" said the one. "Save thy soul!" cried the other, and they fell by the ears like angry children. In 1695, when Bossuet had confessed to Fénelon his ignorance of the mystics, the younger priest had made for his senior an

[1] Th. Lavallée, *Madame de Maintenon et Saint-Cyr.*

anthology of extracts, with a view of persuading him that "tous les mystiques exagèrent," and Madame Guyon no more than her great forerunners. Bossuet's stern sense had resisted all persuasion; he was not called upon to pronounce in the case of Saint Theresa or Saint Francis de Sales; he was appointed a judge over Madame Guyon, and he condemned her, with a weight, a brutality, an irony (and even a violation of confidence), which belied his earlier kindness to the poor lady. Even Abbé Fleury, who, wise man, loved equally both Bossuet and Fénelon, admitted "qu'il y avoit eu un peu de passion dans la conduite de M. de Meaux." Bossuet, constantly supreme, was irritated by opposition. Fénelon, less vehement, was hardly less bitter: "M. de Meaux regarde comme un outrage que j'ai consulté les autres sans le consulter. Ne le considérer pas, c'est rompre l'unité." This fine rapier thrust touched the core of the case, and justified the remark of Madame de Maintenon that M. de Meaux was the greatest theologian alive, and M. de Cambrai "le plus bel esprit." "Le plus bel esprit, et le plus chimérique de mon royaume," declared the King.

Those notes and extracts which he had made for Bossuet seemed to Fénelon an admirable defence of Madame Guyon, and he decided to publish them under the title "Explication des Maximes des Saints sur la Vie intérieure." He knew that Bossuet was preparing a "Relation du Quiétisme." Absent

himself at Cambrai, he had left in Paris another self, the Duc de Chevreuse, who waited on the press night and day, sleeping on a camp bed in a corner of the printing office, near the Hôtel de Luynes. The *Maximes des Saints* (the first edition lies before me as I write) appeared in January 1697, at the Librairie de Messeigneurs les Enfans de France, on the Quai des Augustins. A treasure-trove for the bibliophile, the volume to-day has little merit save its rarity. It is difficult to imagine the scandal, the enthusiasm, the devotion, the fury which it created little over two hundred years ago. Perhaps only those who have lived through the "Affaire Dreyfus" can understand to-day the battle that raged round the *Maximes des Saints;* the King openly siding with Bossuet against Fénelon, the Pope timidly partial to the archbishop, the prelates of France raging and rankling variously, the court divided. "On ne parlait d'autre chose jusque chez les dames." The pages of D'Aguesseau (who believed all this Quietism the mysterious shibboleth of a political syndicate inspired by M. de Cambrai), the letters and memoirs of Madame de Sévigné, of Saint-Simon, help us to recapture that evaporated fervour. There is a certain drive which the young Saint-Simon takes, with the Dukes of Bellevue, Chevreuse, and Beauvilliers, in the Park of Versailles, which faintly recalls a famous design of Forain's: *Ils en ont parlé!* They also spoke of their Affair, and Saint-Simon (suffocating between

the respect due to his elders and his indignation at their opinions) stopped the carriage—

"Je leur dis donc, naïvement, que je sentois bien que ce n'étoit pas à moi, à mon âge, à exiger qu'ils se tussent; mais qu'à tout âge on pouvoit sortir d'un carosse!"

XIII

The King, they said, was for Bossuet, and Rome for Fénelon; and conflict raged between these new Guelfs and these new Ghibellines. Europe was divided as to the heresy or saintliness of one tiny volume, the *Maximes des Saints.* And yet, as Bossuet's brother quaintly observed—

"Sans M. de Meaux, il auroit peut-être passé sans qu'on y eût fait réflexion."[1]

Fénelon in his book had one little phrase saying that on the Cross Jesus had suffered in the body, but triumphed in the soul; and these words—wrested to mean the dissociation of matter and spirit—supplied the Bossuetists with a pretext for accusing the exquisite archbishop of that separation between the Higher and the Lower Man which cloaked the shamefullest excesses of the baser mystics. They spoke of his intimacy with Madame Guyon and smiled meaningly: "Les malins ajoutent que Madame Guyon, qui a été fort belle, a les plus belles mains et la plus belle peau qui se puisse,

[1] *Lettres sur la Quiétisme.* See Griselle, op. cit., 99 et seq.

qu'elle n'a pas 50 ans et est en bon point."[1] Bossuet wrote his famous phrase: "si cette Priscille n'a pas trouvé son Montan pour la défendre"; and, from Versailles to Paris, in 1698, every one knew that Montanus was a heretic—nay, a heresiarch—who had formed a secret plan to renew Christianity, in a more perfect law; yet who (tripped up by passion) seduced two married women, and took them from their homes to prophetise and preach with him a heresy. "M. de Cambrai a produit un beau livre pour soutenir Madame Guyon, c'est un de ses premiers chevaliers," wrote the Abbé Bossuet (the bishop's nephew and agent) from Rome; and he goes on to say that the doctrine of Pure Love is spreading far and wide at Cambrai, but that the Pope continues to pay no attention to the energetic protestations of the court of France.

The King had more authority at home. A sort of formulary, implying an abjuration of Fénelon's ideas and Madame Guyon's, was secretly presented to many personages at Versailles; and Bossuet writes, elated, that "several dukes and duchesses" have renounced not only Madame Guyon but M. de Cambrai! Already in August 1697 the King had bidden Fénelon quit Versailles. "They are stripping the tapestries from his apartment!" wrote Bossuet's brother to his son at Rome. This was disgrace; this, indeed, was exile. The archbishop fell seriously ill on the road to Cambrai, at a day's

[1] Griselle, p. 180.

journey from Paris, and had to tarry six weeks in the house of a friend—doubtless none too eager to keep him, for Fénelon involved his friends in his misfortunes. The pious duchesses, accustomed to flattery, felt a void form round them at Marly or Versailles. Save Beauvilliers (whom even Madame de Maintenon could not disgrace) all M. de Cambrai's friends were dismissed from their posts about the heir-presumptive. And Fénelon's brother—an honest officer in the Guards, with no opinion either way as to holy indifference or the necessity of earning merit—was cashiered the service and sent from court a ruined man.

Saint-Cyr, above all, was thoroughly disinfected. The mystical nuns, at least the chief of them, were sent away into eternal exile. The writings of Fénelon, no less than the rhapsodies of Madame Guyon, were condemned and utterly forbidden. The King in person visited St. Cyr, and bade the assembled ladies see that no trace of a false doctrine should poison the pure religion of their house—"qui pourrait infecter tout le royaume, si l'erreur y prenait racine."

Ah, had I the time or the tongue of Sheherazade, I would break off here to tell the sad, the mysterious, the moving story of Madame de la Maisonfort! Hocussed into the religious life by a real abuse of power on the part of Madame de Maintenon—a real abuse of prestige and enchantment on the part, alas! of Fénelon—the charming canoness,

turned nun, lived for some months, some years, in a state of perpetual exaltation, consuming herself in "pur amour" as a taper burns away on the altar. M. Lemaître, who sees love everywhere and nothing but love—who writes of Fénelon and Madame Guyon as he might write of Abelard and Héloïse, if not of Romeo and Juliet—M. Lemaître has not insisted on the nature of the spell cast over this passionate and subtle creature by the character and eloquence of Fénelon. I own that here I might have been more easily persuaded. Cast out from St. Cyr, proscribed, rejected, she asked to be placed at Meaux under the direction of Bossuet; and there, henceforth, we shall find her, always at the ear of the enemy. The great prelate listens, argues, edifies, tears himself from all his business to console and enlighten this extraordinary nun. With inexhaustible patience he answers all her letters, all her questions: "il n'est rien de plus oiseux, de plus subtil, de plus vaporeux dans tout le Quiétisme; il n'est rien, non plus, de plus fin, de plus pur, de plus délicat." And, thanks to Madame de la Maisonfort, little by little the mystical idea penetrates the mind of Bossuet.

XIV

At last Rome, under constant pressure from the King of France, abandoned the Archbishop of

[1] Lavallée, op. cit., 196.

Cambrai. . . . On the 12th of March, 1699, the *Maximes des Saints* were formally condemned. The papal decree was brought to Fénelon in his cathedral as he stood on the stairs of his pulpit. The archbishop took the message from the bearer's hand, and tranquilly read out his own condemnation. And, after a moment's recollection, he preached a memorable, most moving sermon on the text: "Thy will be done!" *Fiat voluntas tua!*

He accepted the condemnation of the Pope, his spiritual superior, but I doubt if ever he really accepted the condemnation of the King—whose ignorance he had judged at close quarters—the King, an average sensual man.

The sting of his disgrace was his dismissal from his tutorship. Since Aristotle left Stageira to train the youthful Alexander, few educators have bestowed themselves so completely on their task as Fénelon, devoted to *petit-Prince*. He had meant to develop the beau ideal of a ruler, and disengage from a violent sensitive child the future saviour of society. Often in his writings he recalls the example of the Greek philosopher; but as something to admire and avoid. Fénelon's conception of the Magnanimous was not Alexander—not a conqueror. It is not the sovereign who should reign, he repeats, but the laws; and in the twenty-second *Dialogue of the Dead* he makes his model monarch, Gélon, say to Dion—

"Il ne faut pas que l'homme règne; il faut qu'il se contente de faire régner les lois. S'il prend la royauté pour lui, il la gâte et se perd lui-même; il ne doit l'exercer que pour le bien des hommes. . . . Je ne leur fis jamais sentir que j'étais le maître; je leur fis seulement sentir qu'eux et moi nous devions céder à la raison et à la justice."

Fénelon's ideal of a King is crowned with olives. He insists repeatedly on the horrors of war; no French author is so completely anti-military, and M. Hervé might find more than one argument in the classic pages of *Télémaque*. War, as Fénelon had seen it exercised, brought in its train merely magnificence and misery, demoralising the great and famishing the humble. Louis XIV went to war much in the spirit of a knight of the Middle Ages, finding in it the natural occupation of a gentleman. When he had had enough of it he made peace, if he wished to see how the flowers were blooming in the parterres of Versailles (he adored his gardens) or the roses reddening on the cheeks of Madame de Montespan. He played war as he played cards: pleased if he won, and, if he lost, aware that one must pay for a pastime. Had he been more serious, more vindictive; had he pushed the war in Flanders to the point of gaining for his country a northern province, great enough to counterbalance the influence of the south; had he made Antwerp a French seaport, and Ghent and Liège, like Cambrai, towns of France, the misery of the poor would have been

compensated by a benefit so substantial as to make every Frenchman (if poorer for a time) at least the heir to future riches. But his pompous, pleasant mind, despite its soundness, its balance and vitality, was not sufficiently capacious to grasp so great a scheme, so that Fénelon, seeing all around him the bloodstained, leaden lining of war's bejewelled mantle, preached to his pupil Peace : Peace on earth and good-will among men.

The prestige of the King (of the Roi-Soleil) was so great still, in the years between 1690 and 1700, that, at every turn, Fénelon set a guard to warn the child of his mind from following this delusive ideal. Idoménée in *Télémaque*, Dion and others in the *Dialogues*, are examples of the Prince Imperfect :— the sovereign brave, impetuous, adored, but selfish, voluptuous, unjust and, half against his will, a grinder of the faces of the poor. Selfish, above all; that is the secret wound which Fénelon is for ever probing—

"Oh bien ! si je retournois au monde," cries Dion, "je laisserois les hommes se gouverner eux-mêmes comme ils pourroient. J'aimerois mieux m'aller cacher dans quelque île déserte que de me charger de gouverner une république. Si on est méchant, on a tout à craindre; si on est bon, on a tout à souffrir—" and Gélon waves him away, melancholy but relentless. "Non, tu ne peux être admis parmi ces âmes bienheureuses qui ont bien gouverné ! Adieu ! "

These are sketches, but in his tale of *Télémaque*

we find a full-length portrait of a king who rules for himself, and not for his people—and few kings in fiction are so living as Idoménée. From the moment when Mentor and Télémaque arrive at his new city, and find the monarch among his masons, busy yet majestic, animating all the scene around him with his intense personality, courteous, magnificent, amiable, infinitely sensitive to all that is exquisite in beauty, breathing and diffusing a more than mortal atmosphere, Idoménée, with his grace of welcome, Idoménée "avec son visage doux et riant," his charming voice, his gift of speech—Idoménée greets us as an old acquaintance.

But sober Mentor knows that these are not the gifts which maintain prosperity in states—

"Il comprit que les forces d'Idoménée ne pouvaient être aussi grandes qu'elles paraissaient . . . cet éclat éblouissant cachant une misère et une faiblesse qui eussent bientôt renversé son empire"—

and he says to the builder of Salente—

"Vous avez épuisé vos richesses. Vous n'avez songé ni à augmenter votre peuple, ni à cultiver vos terres fertiles. Vous ne songez au-dedans de votre nouvelle ville qu'à y faire des ouvrages magnifiques. C'est ce qui vous a coûté tant de mauvaises nuits.... Vous ne deviez songer qu'à l'agriculture et à l'établissement des plus sages lois—à avoir beaucoup de bons hommes et des terres bien cultivées pour les nourrir." And the builder of Versailles bows his head—

"Il est vrai que j'ai négligé l'agriculture et même le commerce. Je n'ai songé qu'à faire une ville magnifique."

Mentor and Télémaque save Idoménée—Télémaque fights his battles while Mentor rules his state; for the King, though a perfect model of outward majesty, is ignorant, is feeble, and could not save himself. Prompt and kind, sincere, liberal, upright, his real qualities have been ruined by omnipotence. He is vain, jealous, infatuate, overbearing as a spoilt child; he cannot command his passions, he is sensual and melancholy; at the least contrariety his tears, his sighs, his groans fill the palace, and will not be comforted; yet, with all this softness and self-indulgence he can be cruelly hard to such as cross his whim. His honest, adroit, mediocre mind is incapable of large views: "il s'applique trop au détail et ne médite pas assez le gros de ses affaires. . . . Il a un caractère d'esprit court et subalterne." Who knows? Perhaps he considered Mentor "un esprit chimérique."

Télémaque was not written for the public. It was a series of lessons, composed to familiarise *petit-Prince* with the personages of Homer and Virgil; to instil into him the sense of antiquity, and at the same time to teach him the whole duty of a king. This *vade-mecum* of a Crown Prince suddenly became the novel of the hour, was acclaimed by Europe, and earned its author, with so much glory, a disgrace far deeper, far more personal, than that

which resulted from the condemnation of the Pope. The faithlessness of a secretary, to whom the rough sheets had been entrusted for transcription, gave *Télémaque* to the press. The book, which was written for a school-boy, is now again a school-book —such is the fate of the classics. But *Télémaque* when it appeared had a very different sort of fame —a prodigious, notorious success—the success of a pamphlet or a satire. The Protestants in exile, the Jansenists, the Opposition; foreign nations, once vanquished by Louis XIV and still trembling beneath a sword which was no longer steel but only tinsel; and also men of taste, everywhere, sensitive to the new perfection of a masterpiece; lovers of antiquity; sincere believers in the inner life; idealists, philosophers, and the great concourse of those who like to read the works of men whose names are known, especially if they be lustred by a recent scandal—all this immense public acclaimed *Télémaque;* much as in recent times their descendants might have praised *Resurrection* had Tolstoi embittered his book by a full-length portrait of Nicholas II.

XV

And for years an atmosphere of solitude and silence enveloped Fénelon. How did such a man come to be condemned by priests and scholars, by statesmen and men of honour, who judged him—

with passion, doubtless, and with prejudice—but from the depths of their conscience and the height of their science? Thus Galileo was condemned, and Joan of Arc. They, too, had judges not unjust; they, too, appealed to Rome, and their call was not heard. It is the mystery of human judgment, the fallacy of human testimony.

Fénelon seemed to fall into an abyss of silence. Bossuet, not he, officiated at the marriage of his pupil, his *petit-Prince*. Once, years afterwards, the Duc de Chevreuse ventured to Cambrai unallowed, saw his old friend, and dared invite him to his house of Chaulnes—but that was much later, and Chevreuse was so dreamy, so *distrait*, that in him the extreme of daring seemed but a sort of absent-mindedness. Fénelon, by the King's will, was, as it were, magically rapt away out of sight and hearing of that pious world of which, for eight years, he had been the vivifying centre. Never again was he to meet the Duke of Beauvilliers, or the Duchess, or her of Chevreuse, nor any (save the Duchess of Mortemart) of their pious circle. Never again did he meet Madame Guyon. Flung from Vincennes into the Bastille, apparently for life, she was set free in 1703, and went to live in the country near Blois with her married son, where she lingered until 1717, "toujours malade." A regular correspondence between such notable persons as she and the Archbishop was impossible in a time when the King's pleasure violated the privacy of the post.

At long intervals they sent each other, through a trusted friend, stray snatches of spiritual verse—light, dancing screeds of rhyme, which sometimes remind us of Blake's *Songs of Innocence.* Disgrace and exile had no meaning for these mystics. They did not seek to see each other even in secret. Did they not dwell perpetually, released from all contingencies, above the things of this world, in the meeting-place of souls? "Il n'y a point de distance en Dieu" (Fénelon had written once to Madame Guyon); "tout ce qui est un en lui se touche." Theirs was the communion of saints wherein (as he had told her) they might penetrate invisible, intangible, safe from the tyranny of mortal and material things, "s'enfonçant davantage dans cet inconnu de Dieu, où l'on voudrait se perdre à jamais."

Seventeen years of absence from Versailles did not diminish the authority of Fénelon. Absent, he was present among his faithful flock, and Saint-Simon marvels at this extraordinary permeating quality of M. de Cambrai, which seemed to make light of time and space—

"Ce talent si rare, et qu'il avoit au dernier degré, qui lui tint tous ses amis si entièrement attachés toute sa vie, malgré sa chute, et qui, dans leur dispersion, les réunissoit *pour se parler de lui, pour le regretter, pour le désirer, pour se tenir de plus en plus à lui, comme les Juifs pour Jérusalem, et soupirer après son retour, et l'espérer toujours, comme ce malheureux peuple attend encore et soupire après*

le Messie. C'est aussi par cette autorité de prophète qu'il s'étoit acquise sur les siens qu'il s'etoit accoutumé à une domination qui, dans sa douceur, ne vouloit point de résistance."

What was the quality of Fénelon's submission? Doubtless throughout those seventeen years it was not always identical in quality and quantity; more than one thread went to the weaving of it; it was a coat of many colours. The editor of Bossuet's Letters —a great Bossuetist—M. Levesque, has written in a mood of irony of Fénelon's "successive sincerities." The phrase is unjust if it implies duplicity; the phrase is wise and human if it allows for the fluctuations of a sentiment that lasted twenty years.

The truest, sincerest feelings adapt themselves to the character that harbours them, even as water takes the form of the vessel that contains it, while losing nothing of its own intrinsic quality. Fénelon's submission may be summed up in the phrase he loved: *Fiat voluntas tua!* But it was the resignation of a nature naturally proud, and Bossuet was not quite astray when he scoffed—

"M. de Cambrai continue à faire le soumis de l'air du monde le plus arrogant."

His first and most constant mood, I think, was one of complete abandonment, absolute detachment: a sense of the fathomless nothingness of human endeavour, the absolute power and truth of That Which Exists; a feeling of the unimportance of his

own deeds and writings, things of so little account that they might well slip his memory. The Church had blamed him, and doubtless he had deserved this blame, without exactly understanding wherein his error lay. He murmured to himself, no doubt, the words of Madame Guyon—

"Je ne vois point ce qu'on y blâme; je le crois sans le voir."

Fénelon was sincere, he was not simple. This absolute submission to the will of God was traversed at first by many human impulses, by many a startled wince of human honour, by many a revolt of mortal reason. If his own nothingness was apparent to the Archbishop of Cambrai, I think that the spiritual insignificance of Bossuet, that of the King, appeared perhaps even more clearly evident! And in his heart he knew that, not the Pope (but only Bossuet and the King) had really condemned him: "Rome ne manquera pas de dire que le respect humain n'a aucune part à sa décision, mais qui le croira?" So much he did allow himself to murmur.

Rome had condemned Joan of Arc—many another—and had reverted from that decision, had re-established the memory of those she had cast off—had blessed what once she had cursed, and adored what once she had burned. Fénelon knew that a papal condemnation is not eternal, but an affair of opportunity; reasons of expediency may prompt it.

But let Fénelon himself explain the resistance

that underlay his apparent resigned obedience! A man convinced against his will has rarely expressed himself with more sincerity—

"Je n'ai jamais pensé" (writes Fénelon) "les erreurs qu'ils m'imputent. Je puis bien, par docilité pour le Pape, condamner mon livre comme exprimant ce que je n'avais pas cru exprimer; mais je ne puis trahir ma conscience pour me noircir lâchement moi-même sur des erreurs que je ne pensai jamais. . . . Le Pape entend mieux mon livre que je n'ai su l'entendre; c'est sur quoi je me soumets; mais, pour ma pensée, je puis dire que je la sais mieux que personne; c'est la seule chose qu'on peut prétendre savoir mieux que tout autre, sans présomption."[1]

Rome had declared his volume heretical, in the sense in which Rome had construed it; the Archbishop spurned the book. He had expressed himself badly—*maxima culpa!* But that was all.

XVI

And in fact, in his solitude of Cambrai, the heretic grew to be a saint. Like those Indian prophets that increase in their tombs and occupy the world more completely after they have left it—demanding year by year a large monument, a wider temple—Fénelon at Cambrai was more than ever the secret oracle of his faithful followers, and his

[1] H. Brémond, *Apologie pour Fénelon*, p. 184.

flock became more numerous in his continued absence, while the Archbishop lived in Flanders *sub specie æternitatis*.

A human type in its flower is sure of our recollection. *Télémaque*, beside *Utopia*, may stand unopened on our shelves: we shall not forget Sir Thomas More or Fénelon. The essential flame of French Christianity burns clear in the great Archbishop, soars high and pure, shedding more light than warmth. Francis at Assisi, Wesley in Cornwall, Luther and St. Teresa are not more perfect examples of the spirit of an age, the character of a race, the religious experience of a soul.

Fénelon at Cambrai continued to live and pray as a man for whom the interior world exists . . . seeing himself and things as in a dream, as an image in a glass, standing aloof from the real world and its businesses. "An invisible barrier seems to rise between the outer life and me, which keeps me from desiring to mingle with it," he says in one of those letters which reveal the perfect unity of his soul; for every line of Fénelon's—letters, sermons, notes, publications, private jottings—is in harmony with such a various oneness as we may find in the orchestration of a piece of music—

"The least thing crushes me; the faintest smile of fortune makes my spirit rise with a bound. How mortifying to feel oneself so weak, tender to self, callous where others are in question—so quick to wince at the shadow of a cross, so ready to amuse

oneself with the flattering tales of hope!—God opens a strange book before our eyes when He shows us how to read in our own heart! I am to myself a most unruly bishopric, more difficult to govern than the diocese of Cambrai."

If earth seemed unreal, Heaven seemed farther off in those first years of exile. The last purification of eternal love is caused by the apparent withdrawal of its immortal object; the soul, separated from all its desires, persecuted, ashamed, censured for the shadow of uncommitted sins, seems to have still one refuge from the outer world . . . the loving arms of God; and behold, they are closed to it! Fénelon on his cross at Cambrai knew the desperate cry of Christ: *Eli*, *Eli*, *lemâ sabakthani*, and in that hour of supreme sacrifice the phantom of self expired. Fénelon, in his "paix amère et sèche," in his blind faith that no vision glorified, knew that terrible season through which all saints have passed, when, as St. John has written, "there was a great silence in heaven."

That state which seems so near despair, so close to desolation—that state of denuded, stript, and hungered faith, is not unblest to the mystic: "Blessèd are the poor in spirit!" St. François de Sales has described this condition of "*très-sainte indifference*," when not only temporal comforts but the benedictions of the other life appear out of reach, and almost inexistent. Not to be too much rejoiced in our spiritual joys, nor too cast down in

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our spiritual trials is perhaps the essential secret of the inner life, and in this rude school Fénelon learned to possess it perfectly. He had doubtless read in St. Teresa—who copied here the book of her own heart (we quote the translation of Arnauld)—

"Quand une âme entre avec courage dans le chemin de l'oraison mentale, et qu'elle gagne sur elle-même de n'avoir, ni beaucoup de joie dans les consolations, ni beaucoup de peine dans les sècheresses, cette âme a déjà parcouru une grande partie de la carrière."

Fénelon had doubtless often meditated this passage, and he lived his life in a sort of serious detachment, accomplishing its trifles with care, on account of their inner moment and meaning to the soul, while considering its trials and desperate passes as trifles, because of that interior force on which he relied, whose mysterious efficacy made all things easy.

In this twilit or starlit region of the spiritual life beyond the Gate of Tears, there are times when the exterior world seems blotted out, the world and self, no less than that which stirs within the abyss. And even as we cry: It is finished! the capacity of our nature is mysteriously enlarged—a new life streams into the broken heart, a life full of tranquillity and peace: *unum est necessarium, et Maria elegit meliorem partem.*

Such a meek dependence on the love of God does not in any degree imply inertia; the soul absorbed in peace may move in a way so free, so natural, so unconstrained, it almost seems as if she did not move at all; the time of our business shall not differ then from the time of prayer or recollection; in that inner silence which no bruit of self disturbs, we shall work and strive with success, accustoming ourselves "à faire les affaires même en esprit d'oraison."

XVII

"Je ne suis pas, ô mon Dieu, ce qui est; hélas, je suis presque ce qui n'est pas. Je me vois comme un milieu incompréhensible entre le néant et l'être. Je suis celui qui a été; je suis celui qui sera; je suis celui qui n'est plus ce qu'il a été; je suis celui qui n'est pas encore ce qu'il sera. Et dans cet entre-deux, que suis-je? Un je ne sais quoi qui ne peut s'arrêter en soi, qui n'a aucune consistance. Qui s'enfuit de mes propres mains et s'écoule rapidement comme l'eau. . . . Ma durée n'est qu'une défaillance perpétuelle."[1]

Fénelon, like Spinoza (whom he sometimes resembles—imagine a knightly, a Catholic Spinoza!), loses himself constantly in contemplation of the eternal—perceives that we cannot say to the Infinite: Thus far shalt Thou go and no further—sees that

[1] Fénelon, *De l'existence de Dieu*, II, Chap. V.

the Divinity is all or nothing, and that if a God exist, He penetrates everything. And Fénelon believed ardently, absolutely.

"Je ne suis plus ce que j'ai été—je ne suis pas encore ce que je serai!" The passage from one century to another—always a moving moment of time—accentuated Fénelon's sense of the fleetingness of human life. Age was stealing on insensibly; without revolt the Archbishop accustomed himself to growing old. In 1701 he had attained his fiftieth year.

He attained it as, in his youth, climbing the hills of his home, he used to reach atop the rolling plateau—

> "Ces sommets sont des campagnes
> Qui portent d'autres montagnes."

Nothing was finished! Life rolled on at a higher level, no less fruitful, varied, and with a wider prospect. There are young saints more passionate, more winning, more sincere; but (from the age of fifty to his death at sixty-five) what saint or demi-saint is more endearing, more noble, more irresistibly attractive than Fénelon in exile? Cambrai had been at once his ordeal and his opportunity, and he rose from his cross transfigured.

In his solitude at Cambrai he had time to meditate on the distress of France, and to relieve it. In this extreme outpost, harassed by frequent wars, the misery was great. Cambrai was but recently

annexed, and the population (wholly Flemish in language, habits and preference) was hostile to the rule of France. One part of the Archbishop's spiritual diocese was still subject to the temporal authority of the Empire, and the difficulty, always great, of governing an unconciliated province was increased when war time brought the conqueror face to face with the master of yesterday. And Fénelon the Frenchman had still an easier task than Fénelon the Churchman. For Protestants and Jansenists were rife in Cambrai. The new Archbishop was familiar with the Huguenots; he had earned his first successes as a missionary in Poitou, and those successes had been considerable. To insist on essentials with rigid sincerity, but to limit these essentials to their narrowest expression, was Fénelon's principle. Of old, in Poitou, he had scandalised Bossuet when he proposed to suppress the Ave Maria, in his dread of wounding his "little children." Fénelon had known what it is to be condemned by the Church; he felt that a man might err with a pure heart, and drop the clue of truth while safely enveloped in the cloak of the Eternal. He was strict in respecting and enforcing the central doctrines of Rome, and his controversies with the Jansenists were unflinching. Yet Saint-Simon, after recording these "grands combats de plume," affirms the loving-kindness of the Archbishop for all his flock—sheep, goats, and even wolves! None were disquieted in their persons.

"Cambrai leur fut un lieu de constant asile et de paix. Heureux et contents d'y trouver du repos, ils ne s'émurent en rien à l'égard de leur archevêque qui, contraire à leur doctrine, leur laissait toute sorte de tranquillité; ils donnèrent peu d'atteintes à l'amour général que tous portèrent à Fénelon. . . ."

And we remember how, in a conversation recorded by the Chevalier de Ramsay (Fénelon's convert from Scotland), the Archbishop of Cambrai sent this message to the Stuart Pretender—

"Sur toutes choses, ne forcez jamais vos sujets à changer de religion! . . . La force ne peut jamais persuader des hommes; elle ne fait que des hypocrites. . . . Accordez à tous la tolérance civile, non en approuvant tout comme indifférent, mais en souffrant avec patience ce que Dieu souffre. . . ."

An outward conformity appeared to him a profanation and a sacrilege. At Cambrai, as in Poitou, he discountenanced it, and used all the influence of his state to enable the more stubborn spirits to emigrate to Protestant countries—a favour difficult to obtain in those days, when emigration was an act of treason or desertion, unless permitted by the King.

"Je travaille doucement, et je ménage les esprits pour me mettre à leur portée;" so Fénelon wrote to the Duke of Beauvilliers. "Ils m'aiment assez parce qu'ils me trouvent sans hauteur, tranquille, et d'une conduite uniforme. Ils se fient assez à moi."

"Il ne courait après personne," wrote Saint-Simon; but little by little the quiet charm of his attraction

worked. "Ses aumônes, ses visites, ses prédications fréquentes dans la ville et dans les villages, la facilité de son accès, son humanité avec les petits, sa politesse avec les autres, ses grâces naturelles, enfin, le firent adorer de son peuple." The deep calls to the deep, and the stars answer in glory one to another. So, in the things of the soul, authority, constraint, effort are unavailing. It is the quiet force up-welling from some deep reserve at the back of Nature which, in a Buddha or a Francis, a Plato or a Fénelon, fills the fountains of the Eternal. In 1708, when the French reverses beat back the troops towards Cambrai and brought Fénelon on the borders of the seat of war, he showed the full measure of his spiritual genius. Not only his famished, war-desolated people, but the army and the wounded—all the wounded on either side—were welcomed into his fold. The country clergy were ruined by the failure of the ruined peasants to pay their tithe; the Archbishop paid the tithe. Cambrai was full of fugitive farmers and shepherds vainly seeking safety and housing for themselves and their flocks. Fénelon opened wide the gate of his palace; and the corridors and galleries were thronged with camping countrymen, the courts and gardens were turned into a stable yard. The Archbishop said: God will provide! and by some miracle arranged to feed them all. His house was full of officers and wounded soldiers, so that, at one season, he had daily a hundred and fifty guests at his table.

He gave a holiday to the young clerics in his seminaries and turned their dormitories into wards for the wounded. And the harvest of his vast episcopal estates he poured into the empty bins of the hungry soldiers, feeding the troops at his expense.

"Il s'acquit l'amour de ses ennemis par ses soins pour les personnes retenues à Cambrai, logeant aussi chez lui les officiers ennemis, et répandant ses liberalités sur leurs soldats comme sur les nôtres." Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough, touched by so rare a generosity, forbade their troops to ravage the lands of the Archbishop of Cambrai, and left intact his harvests, dedicated to the poor.

XVIII

One day (at least some while after the month of April 1707) an unexpected visitor knocked at the gate of Fénelon's palace. It was the Abbé Ledieu, who had long been secretary and agent to Bossuet, recently dead; and now, being in Flanders, he had called to see his defunct master's old friend and enemy.

Ledieu has left us a picture of Fénelon at Cambrai so precise and living in its details that, in reading it, we seem to share with him the benefit of the Prince-Archbishop's hospitality.

"The prelate was habited in long violet robes, cassock and gown, with the facings, buttons and

buttonholes of a pinkish scarlet. He wore neither fringe nor tassels of gold to his sash; and round his hat a simple cord of green silk; white gloves on his hands; neither a cane nor a mantle. As dinner had been already announced, he rose and invited me to his table. The other guests were all assembled in the dining-room in attendance. We washed our hands without ceremony. The prelate asked a grace and took the head of the table, with the Abbé de Chanterac at his left hand. The others seated themselves as most convenient, and the right-hand seat remaining empty, the Archbishop signed to me to take it. The table was served with magnificence and refinement: several sorts of soup, good beef, good mutton, entrées and ragôuts of many a kind, a great piece of roast meat, partridges and game, magnificent fruit, a good red wine, no beer, clean linen, excellent bread, and a handsome service of silver plate. The Archbishop took the trouble to help me with his own hands to everything that was most delicate; I thanked him hat in hand, and he never failed to lift his own hat in acknowledgment. The conversation was very easy, pleasant, smooth, and even gay. The prelate talked with every one in turn and left us an honest liberty. As for himself, he ate very little, and nothing of a substantial sort. And once or twice only he tasted a light white wine, very pale in colour. It is not surprising that he should appear emaciated! Yet he does not cease to enjoy good health. I think a secret grief preys upon him; he looks mortified. . . . When dinner was over we all retired to the great bed-chamber of my lord the Archbishop. He sat in the middle of the room in front of the fire, having beside him a little writing-table. Coffee was brought in sufficient

abundance for all present to partake of it. The conversation turned on the topics of the day. After supper those present drew me on to speak of the death of M. de Meaux, asking me if he had been conscious of the end, if he had received the sacraments. Then the prelate inquired expressly who had prepared him to die? I thought, when he asked the question, that the Archbishop believed M. de Meaux to have been in need of good counsel in his last moments, and of a person of authority present beside his death-bed, after having been involved in affairs so important and so delicate. And in all our talk my lord the Archbishop said not the least word in praise of M. de Meaux. . . ."

The Abbé Ledieu, had he been the sort of mind to perceive such a change, might have told the Archbishop that M. de Meaux had died an altered man. Bossuet's pious egotism, his practical and positive good sense, his violent sense of supremacy and conviction of his own orthodoxy, had dreaded and derided the "pur amour," the "foi nue" of his great rival. The Augustinian bishop, bathed in the Methodist sanctity of Port Royal, had condemned the metaphysical ecstasy of a Fénelon. What was this murmur of an Inner Path, a Secret Way, plunging the Soul of Man in the Infinite Abyss of Godhead, whelming him in the Eternal as He was before the creation of the world? Bossuet, severely startled, had called out that this was heresy.

During the ardour of battle his front remained unchanged; but when the victory was his he had

recollected the maxims of his adversary. In the gathering solitude of old age M. de Meaux opened the writings of the saints; M. de Meaux entered into his own heart; and so at last from his mouth, from his hand, as he writes to his penitents, proceeds the very thought of Fénelon—

"Ce n'est pas le plaisir d'aimer—c'est aimer que je veux. . . . Tout consiste à pénétrer cette vérité qu'il faut aller à Dieu, pour ainsi parler, en droiture, et s'en remplir tellement qu'il n'y ait plus de retour sur nous."[1]

Such was the triumph of Madame de la Maisonfort: the subtle and enchanting lady, in their long arguments, had persuaded the obstinate Bishop of the reality of her inward rapture. At least it appears that, in his latter days, Bossuet accorded to the mystics many points that, a few years before, he had ardently debated. In the *Deuxième Instruction sur les états d'oraison*, recently discovered,[2] he admits the possibility of a faith—a *foi nue*—stript of all images and all ideas, beyond vision, beyond reason, a state that has no name in any human language, a movement that corresponds to an Infinite surpassing our capacity. *Le pur amour . . . la foi nue*—were no longer the shibboleth of false idolaters to Bossuet.

The bishop's temper, his feelings, were more stubborn than his mind. Bossuet never softened

[1] See Henri Brémond, *Apologie pour Fénelon*, p. 474.
[2] Rebelliau, *Bossuet*, p. 174.

to his old friend, nor to that siren, *Guyonia sua.* Some little while before the bishop's death Madame de Maintenon, teased by a vague remorse, had murmured one day that Madame Guyon had been confined a good many years in prison. . . . "She is very well where she is!" exclaimed Bossuet. "Leave her there!"

And Fénelon, doubtless remembering all this—ruminating, too, perchance, over Bossuet's senile servitude to a certain Mademoiselle de Mauléon and that vain gossip of their secret marriage—Fénelon could not praise the man who had imputed to himself the morals of Montanus.

For no woman ruled at Cambrai in the palace of the Prince-Archbishop. The silence of Fénelon is eloquent: I think the gentle Fénelon never quite forgave his enemy! Ten years after his condemnation, in a memoir addressed to the Duc de Chevreuse, he wrote in a rare moment of self-righteousness—

"Feu M. de Meaux a combattu mon livre par prévention pour une doctrine pernicieuse et insoutenable, qui est de dire que la raison d'aimer Dieu ne s'explique que par le seul désir du bonheur. On a toléré et laissé triompher cette indigne doctrine qui dégrade la charité en la réduisant au seul motif de l'espérance. Celui qui errait a prévalu; celui qui était exempt d'erreur a été écrasé."

XIX

The Duke of Burgundy remained passionately attached to his exiled tutor. For the first four years of his banishment he kept the King's command and refrained from all direct communication with Cambrai; but, being come to man's estate and twenty years of age, he broke silence at Christmas-time in 1701, and profited by a rare chance of corresponding with a friend disgraced.

"Enfin, mon cher archevêque, je trouve une occasion favorable de rompre le silence où j'ai demeuré depuis quatre ans. J'ai souffert bien des maux depuis; mais un des plus grands a été de ne pouvoir point vous témoigner ce que je sentais pour vous pendant ce temps et que mon amitié augmentait par vos malheurs au lieu d'en être refroidie. . . . Je continue toujours à étudier tout seul. . . . Rien ne me fait plus de plaisir que la métaphysique et la morale, et je ne saurais me lasser d'y travailler. J'eu ai fait quelques petits ouvrages que je voudrais bien être en état de vous envoyer, afin que vous les corrigeassiez comme vous faisiez autre fois mes thèmes. Je ne vous dirai point combien je suis revolté moi-même contre tout ce qu'on a fait à votre égard; mais it faut se soumettre à la volonté de Dieu, et croire que tout cela est arrivé pour votre bien. Adieu, mon cher archevêque. Je vous embrasse de tout more cœur, et ne trouverai peut-être de bien longtemps l'occasion de vous écrire. Je vous demande vos prières et votre bénédiction.

"LOUIS."[1]

[1] Jules Lemaitre, *Fénelon*, p. 279.

The charming, childish letter, with its perfume of honesty, its fresh familiar grace, must have gone straight to the heart of Fénelon. For some while, no doubt, it had no successor: correspondence was not secret at Court. And M. de Cambrai was taboo. All communications with him were forbidden, and, though a trusty messenger carried to and fro an unsuspected correspondence with Beauvilliers and Chevreuse, Fénelon was blotted out of existence at Versailles by the orders of an unforgiving King. The offence of *Télémaque* was never pardoned. Yet, in his death-in-life at Cambrai, the Archbishop grew more than ever the secret inspiration of his faithful followers; absence and exile added to his prestige. From the depth of his retreat, Fénelon presided over every action, every tendency of the little group of his followers, and the banished heretic, odious to the King, was the secret oracle of the Dauphin's heir.

In 1708, when the young Duke was sent on the Flemish frontier to command the Royal troops, the King forbade him to enter the Archbishop's palace, but master and pupil arranged to meet on the road: "Je serai demain à Cambrai sur les neuf heures; j'y mangerai un morceau à la poste et je monterai ensuite à cheval pour me rendre à Valenciennes. J'espère vous y voir, vous y entretenir de diverses choses." Thus P. P. wrote to his master. The King was singularly blind if he thought that this atmosphere of romantic secrecy was likely to

diminish the attraction of the exile. "Il me paraît que, pour ne me guère voir," wrote the lad, "vous ne me connaissez pas mal encore!"

And then, in April 1711, the old Dauphin died. Fénelon's pupil, Petit-Prince, became heir to the throne. And the King was seventy-three. A turn of Fortune's wheel in one night brought Fénelon to the top. "Cambrai is no longer so out of the way," wrote Saint-Simon, "but on the direct road to everywhere." Beauvilliers could not conceal the radiance of his happiness; he saw before him, after years of persecution, "une sorte de dictature," to be shared with the Duke of Chevreuse, and their idol, their oracle, their shepherd:—the exile of Cambrai.

XX

At Versailles the new Dauphin and his friends appeared, if not as the masters of the hour, at least as the prophets of the morrow. Even the King, even Madame de Maintenon, observed a certain tolerant discretion.

When the Duke of Chevreuse set off for Cambrai no reproof followed this act, which, unless secretly authorised, smacked of disobedience and defiance. When, in November 1711, the Archbishop returned the visit, and went to the Château of Chaulnes, the King and his consort still kept silence. The new Dauphin—whose piety and reserve had a short

while ago appeared unprincely—was now the dear idol of Madame de Maintenon; the King had given him a seat in his councils.

And Fénelon was the oracle of to-morrow's monarch! The conjunction at Chaulnes of Fénelon and Chevreuse, which would have been treason the year before, in this autumn of 1711 was a great political event.

After twelve years these friends (of old inseparable, still devoted, at last triumphant) met once more. How many things they must have had to exchange, in mind, thoughts, reminiscence, household news! Little enough, no doubt. Either was accustomed, these many years, to meet the other in their common centre, the hope of universal good.

Fénelon had made himself a heart as deep as the sea—that heart "immense comme la mer" which in his spiritual letters he wishes his penitents—and now, instead of chatting agreeably of dear private memories, he employed the scant hours of his interview with Chevreuse in drawing up those "Tables de Chaulnes" which are the project and the prophecy of Liberal France.

Fénelon's originality, that which made him really a precursor, was his sense of the value of liberty. To Bossuet, as to all the great classic minds of his age, there was a beauty and a value in mere limitation, and power which was not arbitrary appeared to them a failure in authority. The nation lived to produce a King, not the King to produce a nation.

But Fénelon saw that a wise government rules, not for itself, but in order to assist the free development of a people; and he was the first in France to frame the thought of a kingdom administering its own estates. Already in August 1710 he had written to Chevreuse—

"Notre mal vient de ce que cette guerre n'a été jusqu'ici que l'affaire du roi; il faudrait en faire l'affaire véritable de tout le corps de la nation . . . il faudrait qu'il se repandit dans toute notre nation une persuasion intime et constante que c'est la nation entière elle-même qui soutient, pour son propre intérêt, le poids de cette guerre. . . . C'est la nation qui doit se sauver elle-même."

In order to animate a whole torpid people with a spirit of self-consciousness, there is no means so sure as representation. Fénelon proposed a sort of Parliament of Lords, Bishops, magistrates, merchant princes and manufacturers "and even financiers," "non seulement pour en tirer des lumières, mais encore pour le rendre responsable du governement, et pour faire sentir au royaume entier que les plus sages têtes qu'on peut y trouver ont part à ce qu'on fait pour la cause publique."

When we read the "Tables of Chaulnes" it is impossible not to wonder what would have been the fate of France if the kingdom had been ruled, as early as 1715, on wise and Liberal lines, by a King of parts and principles, with a man of genius for his Grand Vizier. Rare is the spectacle of a

noble nature governing a noble nation in the interests of ideal good. Have we ever witnessed it? France might then have given us that great sight: Liberty, without the chimæra of equality; fraternity, without Cain by the side of Abel; and tolerance for all.

Fénelon's plan of reform is based on peace—peace at any price—even if that price entail the cession of Cambrai, his own principality, the home of his old age. . . . "Jamais de guerre générale contre l'Europe." We know Fénelon's principles: "il n'y a point de guerre qui, même heureusement terminée, ne fasse plus de mal que de bien à un Etat." Still, he enjoins a regular army—a small army, and a large militia, with a career open to talent and nothing allowed by favour; a small number of regiments, but fully equipped and manned, well disciplined and well paid.

His most stringent reforms curtail the expenses of the Court; they amount almost to the suppression of Versailles. The words "retranchement," "diminution," "renoncement," "réduction" recur in every line. And what is spared from the expenses of the King is to be given to the people. Suppression of the poll-tax, the salt-tax, the King's tithe. "No more financiers!" Reform of the game-laws, "à cause de l'abondance des bêtes fauves, lièvres, etc. qui gâtent les grains, vignes et prés." No private courts of justice for the great lords, nor even for the King in the villages of his appanage; save for certain game-laws and by-laws, one com-

mon law for all the kingdom. And Fénelon suggests a policy of Free Trade—

"Délibérer dans les états-généraux s'il faut abandonner les droits d'entrée et de sortie du royaume."

"La France est assez riche, si elle vend bien ses bleds, huiles, vins, toiles."

"Ce qu'elle achetera des Anglais et Hollandais sont épiceries et curiosités nullement comparables. *Laisser liberté.*"

Freedom of manufactures "pour faire mieux que les étrangers sans exclusion de leurs ouvrages."

A principle of local government giving its own Council to every province, should counterbalance the centralisation of Versailles; and these provincial Councils were not only to be charged with the voting of taxes, with all details of administration and police, but were to be consulted on questions of Empire—such as war, negotiations of peace, and projects of alliance with foreign powers.

And, as the King was to be limited in his tyranny by the Provincial Councils, so also was he to be kept in check by the restoration of a resident provincial aristocracy. No more absentees! no more "glittering beings of Versailles," but a nobility rooted in the soil. In the constitution of the élite we see the hand of Télémaque's Utopian mentor: A sort of Herald's College was to examine the arms and titles of all the nobility of France, to exclude impostors, and to register a list of those whose pretentions were justified. A central registration office

in Paris would certify the birth of every child, and no branch should be recognised as noble unless recorded in its ledgers.

The King should have no power to raise commoners to the peerage save in recognition of some considerable service rendered to the State.

Members of the certified nobility should, like princes of a royal house, be forbidden to marry out of their rank, sons and daughters alike.

The King should have no power to make princes of his own illegitimate children.

No property bought or sold should carry its title with it.

The principle of primogeniture should preserve the authority and wealth of the head of the house; while the practice of law and trade should be allowed to men of noble birth, without derogation, in order to provide for the cadets.

The privileges of nobles should be purely honorific . . . a nobleman should see no shame in poverty.

Having thus hedged about the divinity of Kings with a double rank of aristocrats and Local Councils, Fénelon, at Chaulnes, proceeded to limit the power of the monarch in the direction of the Church. He desired a sort of separation between Church and State—"such a condition as the Protestants used to enjoy in the kingdom of France, or as the Catholic Church possesses in the dominions of the Sultan!" The King is to have no authority, no

judgment, no decision in ecclesiastical matters, for which Rome is the sole centre of unity. The King preserves a right to reject such Papal Bulls as infringe upon his temporal power, for the Pope has no temporal power over sovereigns. . . . So Fénelon at Chaulnes, pen in hand, sitting at the writing-table with his old friend Chevreuse, contemplated a France reformed, renewed, revived—a France guided and governed by the principles of *Télémaque*. And they prepared, for the future, the City of the Common Weal.

XXI

A few months later, early in 1712, the wife of the Duke of Burgundy died on the 9th of February, the Duke himself on the 18th, their infant son a few days later. . . . The blow was the more terrible that the Court, and indeed all the kingdom, at first believed their death to be the work of a traitor. It is probable that Fénelon's Petit-Prince, his wife and child all died of confluent measles. But the nation suspected the Duke of Orleans of poisoning his cousins in order to prepare a Regency; a King of seventy-four and a baby of two years old were all that stood between him and the throne.

When Fénelon heard the fatal news he fell into a fit of real despair—such a Slough of Despond as he had traversed on the morrow of his exile from Versailles. He wrote to Chevreuse—

"Hélas, mon bon duc, Dieu nous a ôté toute notre espérance pour l'Eglise et pour l'Etat. Il a formé ce jeune prince; il l'a orné, il l'a préparé pour les plus grands biens; il l'a montré au monde, et aussitôt il l'a détruit! Je suis saisi d'horreur, et malade de saisissement, sans maladie."

Petit-Prince was indeed Marcellus. France, in a vision, had but looked on a prince of whom she was not worthy—a dear expectation, merged too soon in eternal regret. What would have been the future had Petit-Prince come to the throne? The question rises ceaselessly in the mind of an historian. Once dead, the Dauphin appeared a miracle of wisdom, patience, prudence, charity and justice, a roi-philosophe;" a new Saint Louis. And we shall never know if P. P. would really have been all this, or whether like his brother Philip (whom the Spaniards had chosen for their sovereign), he would have grown into a gentle, dull young king, not incapable, not unkindly, uxorious and clerical.

The end of Fénelon's life is sad. With his dear pupil all his dreams and hopes of reform had vanished. Death shook a tree; and, one after another, like falling leaves in autumn, the friends of Fénelon dropped out of existence. The first to go had been the Abbé de Langeron—the companion of all his days, he whom we first met at Fénelon's side in their walks with Bossuet when the two young clerics had admired and smiled at the "Sublime which issued as from chinks and clefts" in the most ordinary discourse of the great orator. When

Fénelon had been appointed tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, Langeron had accompanied him; and as he had shared the honours, so he took his part in his friend's disgrace. He had lived at the Court of Versailles to be near him, and he was near him at Cambrai. When Fénelon made his will in 1705 he had named for his executor this devoted Langeron: "ami précieux, que Dieu m'a donné dès notre première jeunesse, et qui a fait une des plus grandes consolations de ma vie." In the autumn of their lives (their fiftieth year being past) Langeron was still the faithful companion of those long country walks which were the Archbishop's relaxation—it was he, perhaps, who helped him to drive home to the farmer's yard and stable the strayed cow that figures so large in his legend; and perhaps he it was who helped the prelate bind the wounds of the soldiers at Malplaquet. In November 1710, Langeron died in the arms of his friend. And thenceforward, when the familiar name fell from the lips of the commensals of the palace, a tear would start from those eyes of the Archbishop, whence, as a rule, issued not tears but mind and fire: "le feu et l'esprit—en sortoient comme un torrent."

When (a few months after Langeron) his royal pupil's father died, doubtless a new course was given to the Archbishop's thoughts; and Chevreuse, miraculously refound, to some extent supplied the void left by a lost companion, while an interest was given to the future by the triumph of their Esdras, their Eliacin. But the death of the Dauphin tore open

an unhealed wound: "L'amitié," said he, "coûte cher en ce monde. En pleurant le prince mort, qui me déchire le cœur, je suis alarmé pour les vivants." "Ma tendresse m'alarme pour vous," he wrote to the Duc de Chevreuse, "et pour le *Bon* [M. de Beauvilliers]; "de plus je crains pour le roi; sa conservation est infiniment importante." Fénelon's tender anxiety did not delude him. Chevreuse, broken-hearted, died in this same year, 1712. Beauvilliers, stricken to the core, incapable of renewing his interest in life, lingered but a little longer, and followed his friend and his beloved Petit-Prince in the summer of 1714.

"Les vrais amis," wrote Fénelon, "font notre plus grande douleur et notre plus grande amertume. On serait tenté de désirer que tous les bons amis s'entendissent pour mourir ensemble le même jour."

And he wrote to Madame de Chevreuse—

"Il ne s'est pas éloigné de nous en devenant invisible. Il nous dit d'une voix sécrète: Hâtez-vous de nous rejoindre. Les purs esprits voient, entendent, aiment leurs vrais amis dans leur centre commun. Leur amitié est immortelle comme sa source . . . et l'amitié divine change la société visible dans une société de pure foi."

In this invisible society, his mind rapt in the common centre of all life, Fénelon remained a little while on earth, detached but not indifferent, dwelling, as it were, in a sort of middle state, neither mortal nor immortal—

Μείζω βροτείας προσπεσὼν ὁμιλίας . .

XXII

Fiat voluntas tua! This *Amen* continually welling from the bottom of the heart, preserved the Archbishop from any taint of bitterness or rancour. His life at Cambrai was, if not as cheerful, at least as open, as generous as of old, and he remained (we quote Saint-Simon) "partout un vrai prélat, partout aussi un grand seigneur, partout encore l'auteur de *Télémaque*"—that is to say, a builder of political Utopias. No one, from his way of life, could suspect the part he once had played in the projects of France—the part he had so nearly played again, and which might even yet be offered him once more by his last, his most singular, catechumen, the Duke of Orleans—the future Regent: "Jamais un mot sur la cour, sur les affaires—quoique ce soit qui sentait le moins du monde bassesses, regrets ou flatterie—jamais rien qui pouvoit seulement laisser soupçonner ni ce qu'il avoit été, ni ce qu'il pouvoit encore être." . . . In his palace, surrounded by officers and soldiers, who sought his benefits, his counsels and his charity, Fénelon might have been taken for the Governor of Flanders. Yet, though the order of his life was so large and liberal, the plainness of the details showed the strict habits of the priest.

His hospitality was unbounded. In time of campaign a hundred officers and more (chiefly wounded) might be lodged in his palace and boarded at his

table. Nor was his welcome more narrowly measured to the innumerable nephews and great-nephews of the ancient and needy house of Fénelon. His gardens ran over with little children; the letters of the prelate are full of pretty nicknames—Fanfan, and Tonton, le Follet, Panta, Put. He sends the red fruit of his garden to a niece whom they are to cure of the "pâles couleurs." . . . "Je suis affamé pour vous de cerises. . . . Je remercie les fraises du petit soulagement qu'ils vous donnent." And like a child himself he is amused with all the winning details of a country life: "Il y a sous mes fenêtres cinq ou six lapins blancs qui feraient de belles fourrures, mais ce serait dommage, car ils sont fort jolis et mangent comme un grand prélat"—that is to say, they eat a little salad, and lived, pretty creatures, as sparely as himself.

His letters to all these young people are full of the most charming grace and natural poetry. Here is one to the young head of the house, his great-nephew the Marquis of Fénelon—absent in Périgord. A sort of perfume of homesickness breathes from these pages, and we see the tall, dark, meagre Archbishop, exiled so long among the plains of Flanders, evolving his dear "poor Ithaca" in Gascony.

"Vos deux lettres du 15 et du 19 de ce mois, mon très cher Fanfan, m'ont appris que vous alliez à Fénelon. J'aime bien que vous goûtiez notre pauvre Ithaque, et que vous vous accoutumiez aux

Pénates gothiques de nos pères. . . . Vous me priez de vous écrire deux fois chaque semaine; c'est ce qui est impossible pour Fénelon, à moins que les postes ne soient changées. Je n'ai jamais vu qu'un seul courrier chaque semaine de Paris à Tholoze: il passe par Peyrac. . . . Sachez, je vous prie, si ma nourrice est vivante ou morte, et si elle a touché quelque argent de moi par la voie de notre petit abbé. . . .

"Le *2 août 1714*."[1]

And here is another letter addressed to the same Fanfan, grievously wounded at the wars—

"Tu souffres, mon très-cher petit Fanfan . . . mais il faut aimer les coups de la main de Dieu. Je veux que tu sois patient sans patience, et courageux sans courage. Demande à la Duchesse (de Chevreuse) ce que veut dire cet apparent galimatias. Un courage qu'on possède, qu'on tient comme propre, dont on jouit, dont on se sait bon gré, dont on se fait honneur, est un poison d'orgueil. Il faut au contraire se sentir faible, prêt à tomber, être patient à la vue de son impatience, la voir en paix, la laisser voir aux autres—n'être soutenu que de la seule main de Dieu et vivre d'emprunt. . . . La vertu qu'Il nous prête n'est pas plus à nous que l'air que nous respirons et qui nous fait vivre."[2]

This gentle resignation, this simple tenderness as of a pious La Fontaine, this pleasure in the lovely details of external Nature (which, in the eyes of the

[1] "Fénelon et son pays, d'après des documents nouveaux," par Fortunat Strowski. *Revue de Fribourg*, Juillet, Août, 1903.

[2] Jules Lemaître, *Fénelon*, p. 264.

Archbishop, were marks of the Maker) is flavoured, as it were, with an exquisite detachment from life. Like a bird on the branch in autumn, he twittered a last carol, ready to take his flight on the instant to the other side of the world. In God's own time—*Fiat voluntas tua!*—

"Priez pour moi afin que Dieu seul fasse sa volonté en toutes mes actions, et pour vos anciens amis, afin que l'onction qui enseigne toute vérité leur apprenne la bienheureuse science qui désapproprie l'homme de toutes les autres. . . ."[1]

Fiat voluntas tua! The Love of God is acquiescence in the laws of the universe, welcoming every event, accepting every cross. This doctrine of pure love was not, for Fénelon, a passing opinion, the doctrine of a season, one mood's philosophy. It was the very essence and lesson of his existence—his gospel, his discipline and his ideal. It explains his attitude to life: his detachment, his disinterestedness, something patient beneath his sweetness; something melancholy (or at least disenchanted) mingled in his generosity; which tell of a nature passive and suffering rather than active and energetic. And perhaps—though nothing is so hard to analyse or explain as personal magic—perhaps we may add (with the Abbé Delplanque) that the secret of Fénelon's incomparable influence lay in the union of this quiet faith, this tranquil accept-

[1] Griselle, op. cit., p. 277.

ance, with a temperament extraordinarily loving and affectionate: "un cœur, immense comme la mer."

XXIII

A legend (or rather an anonymous manuscript still preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale) attributes the conversion of Pascal to a carriage accident: one holiday, as he was driving with some friends, on Neuilly Bridge, in a coach and six, the leaders took fright, and, seizing the bit between their teeth, dashed to a place where there was no parapet, and fell into the Seine. Had not the traces given way, the coach, with its drivers, must have followed them to instant death. "Ce qui fit prendre la résolution à M. Pascal de rompre ses promenades et de vivre dans une entière solitude."

This mood of awe, contrition and religious fear is characteristic of the soul of Pascal.

An accident of the same sort befell the Archbishop of Cambrai in the month of November 1714, as he was making one of his episcopal excursions. The coach turned over at a difficult turning; no one was hurt; but the prelate saw the extent of the danger, and felt the commotion of the shock in all his fragile frame. He returned to Cambrai with some degree of fever, but not for a moment had he shown or felt alarm—in the bustle of the upset, when his attendants crowded round him: "Bon,

bon," smiled the Archbishop, "a quoi est ce que je sers au monde? . . . What use am I on earth?"

Not dread, but deliverance, was the sentiment with which Death inspired this disappointed, disenchanted, but ever unembittered, soul. . . . Life to him was a discipline with charming breaks in it, but as a rule irksome, listless, weary, tedious, made up of absence, void, bereavement, exile. . . . Of Death, as we shall see, he knew no fear.

Until deliverance came, he was busy with his task. The heir to the crown of France was a little child; the King an old man. Fénelon, in banishment, sought to safeguard the future—occupied himself with the conversion of the Regent (the dear man's last chimæra), and with a project for a Council of Regency to watch over the destinies of France. He strove to enlist Madame de Maintenon's influence in fostering such a Council. He had written to Beauvilliers, before the Good Duke's death in the summer of 1714—

"Le B. D. peut parler avec toute la reconnaissance due aux bons offices que Madame de M. lui a rendus autrefois. Il peut lui déclarer qu'il parle sans intérêt, ni pour lui ni pour ses amis, sans prévention et sans cabale. Il peut ajouter que pour ses sentiments sur la religion il ne veut jamais avoir d'autres que ceux du Saint Siège, qu'il ne tient à rien d'extraordinaire, et qu'il aurait horreur de ses amis même s'il apercevait en eux quelque entêtement, ou artifice, ou goût de nouveauté."

And then, with a weary sigh he adds, in a sad aside to the Bon Duc, that this their stay is but a broken reed—

"Je ne crains que trop qu'elle sera occupée des jalousies, des délicatesses, des ombrages, des aversions, des dépits et des finesses de femme. . . . Je ne crois pas que Madame de Maintenon agisse par grâce, ni même avec une certaine force de prudence élevée. Mais que sait-on sur ce que Dieu veut faire? Il se sert quelquefois des plus faibles instruments; il fera sa volonté en tout."

XXIV

In the first days of January 1715, as the Duke of Saint-Simon sat at dinner in his house at Paris, a young man came into his presence, showing every sign of deep distress. This was that young Marquis of Fénelon, the Archbishop's great-nephew, dear to him as a son—the "Fanfan" of the letters—

"He told me, in a great state of affliction, that he had just received a courier from Cambrai, apprising him that his great-uncle, the Archbishop, was in danger of death, and he begged me to obtain from the Duke of Orleans the loan of his doctor, Chirac, and implored me to dispatch him in my post-chaise to Cambrai, there and then. I left the table at once, called for my chaise, went to the Duke, who sent at once for Chirac, and (an hour after Fénelon entered my dining-room) the doctor was on the road to Cambrai!"

He did not travel alone. Fénelon's nephews, the Marquis and the Abbé de Beaumont, accompanied him. A second eye-witness describes the sad scene of their arrival at the Archbishop's bedside—[1]

"On the afternoon of the fourth day of his illness (it was the fifth of January), M. l'Abbé de Beaumont and M. le Marquis de Fénelon, his nephews, arrived, having posted from Paris. He experienced a lively consolation on seeing them, and wondered how they had known he was ill and who had given the alarm? . . . Their grief was such that they could not articulate a single word, but pointed to M. l'Abbé de Fénelon, who happened to be at the palace when the Archbishop was taken suddenly ill"—in the afternoon of New Year's Day. "M. l'Abbé de Beaumont and M. le Marquis de Fénelon had taken the precaution to bring from Paris with them the celebrated Chirac, who consulted immediately with the local physicians, gave an emetic, bled the Archbishop a second time . . . but soon was compelled to admit that the disease was more active than his remedies.

"Meanwhile the prelate, who had shown so much feeling at the deathbed of M. l'Abbé de Langeron, his dearest friend—and who had grieved so sorely for M. le Duc de Bourgogne, his pupil—beheld, without a tear, the affliction and the streaming eyes of all those whom on earth he loved the most. . . .

"He suffered a great deal during his last night, and called us more than once to read and pray with

[1] "Extrait de la Relation de la Maladie et de la Mort de Fénelon par son aumônier."—Bausset, *Histoire de Fénelon*, iii., 442.

him. 'My Father,' he said, 'if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet Thy will, not mine, be done! Yes, Lord' (and here his weak voice grew stronger), 'Thy will, not mine!'

"From time to time the fever increased in paroxysms, and his mind wandered, not so much but that he was himself aware of it, and much grieved at it, though nothing escaped him that was in any way violent or unseemly. When the paroxysm ceased, we saw him join his hands, and raise his eyes to heaven, resigning himself in utter submission, and lifting his mind to God in that peace which passeth understanding. This confident submission to the Will of Heaven had from his youth up been the chief inclination of his nature, and was the constant theme of his familiar talk. It was, so to speak, the very food of his soul, which he loved to share with his intimate house-mates."

Fiat voluntas tua! . . . Pater mi, si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste, verumtamen non sicut ego volo, sed sicut tu.

And here there comes on the sad scene a third witness—not an eye-witness this time, but a friend of the priest who administered in his last hours, the great Archbishop (despised by Versailles, rejected of Rome) whom all the land of Flanders revered and honoured as a saint—[1]

"The Dean of the Cathedral, who administered the virtuous Archbishop, came near to his deathbed, holding up the blessed wafer. . . . Fénelon col-

[1] Souvenirs de la sœur Caroline Glorieux: Griselle, *Fénelon Etudes Historiques*, p. 293.

lected the last efforts of his failing strength to raise himself on his pillows, and then, his hands joined in worship, his eyes fixed in rapt adoration, he said—

"'Yes, my Saviour, Jesus Christ, present in this wafer, is my God! He is my Judge . . . but I love Him far more than I fear Him!'

"Je l'aime bien plus que je ne le crains!"

And quietly, almost unconsciously, a little before dawn, Fénelon ceased to breathe on the 7th of January, 1715.

XXV

His last conscious effort had been to dictate a letter to the Père le Tellier, the King's Confessor, repeating on the brink of the grave, when none could doubt of the sincerity of the saint, that which he had constantly maintained: his devotion to the person of Louis XIV (Fénelon was no traitor), his acceptance of all the tenets of the Church (Fénelon was no heretic), and he repeats in his will—

"Quand j'écrivis le livre intitulé *Explication des Maximes des Saints*, je ne songeais qu'à séparer les véritables expériences des saints, approuvés de toute l'Eglise, d'avec les illusions des faux mystiques, pour justifier les unes, pour rejeter les autres. . . .

"A Dieu ne plaise que je prenne ces précautions par une vaine délicatesse pour ma personne! Je crois seulement devoir au caractère épiscopal, dont Dieu a permis que je fusse honoré, qu'on ne m'impute aucune erreur contre la foi, ni aucun ouvrage suspect. . . ."

In the same will, after enjoining a great simplicity for his funeral, the Archbishop leaves all his property to an ecclesiastic—his nephew, Léon de Beaumont—to be employed in good works—

"Quoique j'aime tendrement ma famille, et que je n'oublie pas le mauvais état de ses affaires, je ne crois pourtant pas lui devoir laisser ma succession. Les biens ecclésiastiques ne sont pas destinés aux besoins des familles."

But the Archbishop did not leave a great inheritance. So soon as he was dead, the kinsmen, the young ecclesiastics of his court, his many penitents, his innumerable poor, and all that flock "of which he was the heart, the soul, the oracle, the life," begged some last souvenir, some trifle that had been in his possession, to be treasured in their houses as men treasure a talisman or the relics of a saint. No ready money was found in his chests. The Archbishop had lived from hand to mouth, spending his revenues as they came to him, on the army in Flanders, the poor of his diocese, the sick whom he sheltered in his hospitals, the Sisters of Charity, the penniless students of his university, "and a multitude of other distressful persons." . . . With the price of the prelate's possessions, his heir, the good Abbé de Beaumont, continued all his uncle's alms and pensions, until a new Archbishop was installed in the sorrow-stricken diocese of Cambrai.

XXVI

And now, let us ask with M. Jules Lemaître : what was Fénelon?

The eighteenth century saw in him a man of Feeling, a precursor of Liberty. To the nineteenth, he appeared as the first of the Romantics, until, towards the end of that period, Ferdinand Brunetière and M. Crouslé (pushing to its extremest consequence the suggestion of the Jansenist Saint-Simon) invented a new Fénelon, at once enchanting and sinister:—a chivalrous Tartuffe, a Don Quixote turned Jesuit, a man in whom there was (in equal proportions perhaps) both good and guile. . . . "Ce coquin de Fénelon!" as Brunetière used to cry, in a mingling of anger, hatred and admiration.

The twentieth century already regards as a myth, and an interesting and seductive myth, this Fénelon of yesterday. To-day we admire in Fénelon a mystical saint, or else a moral hero, after the type of Marcus Aurelius. No less than Spinoza, he appears to us exalted by the intellectual love of God. . . . Like St. François de Sales, he chose to "vivre généreusement." Spiritual enthusiasm without zealotry, radiance without passion, charity without intolerance, and the selfless general hope of a broken heart—these are his titles.

A cohort of brilliant theologians, led by MM. Henri Brémond and Delplanque; historians, also,

such as M. Eugène Griselle and M. Maurice Masson; the first critics in France—and we name M. Jules Lemaître and M. Fortunat Strowski—are occupied in restoring the royalty of Fénelon.

"Chère Madame, j'aime de plus en plus Fénelon!" writes to me M. Strowski (in a letter that I beg his leave to quote). "Je crois que c'est un très grand poète dont la poésie n'est pas 'sortie'—elle s'est transformée en idées ingénieuses, systèmes de dévotion et plans politiques."

For my part, I think that Fénelon was a pure and ardent spirit who, having grasped the interior secret of religion, would have been a saint under any dispensation:—Jansenist or Jesuit, Catholic or Protestant, Pagan or Buddhist, Platonist or Laotian—proving in his own person the identity of the deepest soul in man.

For the soul of Fénelon was "un *amen* continuel du fond du cœur," a perfect peace that passes understanding.

And the life of Fénelon was, in its perfection, the generous life.

III

BUFFON IN HIS GARDEN

"Il y a quelqu'un au dix-huitième siècle qui est un réfutateur de Pascal, bien autrement puissant que d'Alembert, Condorcet ou Voltaire: c'est Buffon, c'est la science de la Nature elle-même."—SAINTE-BEUVE, *Port Royal*, III., 414.

"Monsieur de Buffon se porte à merveille. Le corps d'un athlète et l'âme d'un sage; voilà ce qu'il faut pour être heureux."—VOLTAIRE À HELVÉTIUS.

III

BUFFON IN HIS GARDEN

I

A Fénelon is the complement and the reverse of a Pascal; the two compose a perfect image like the different faces of a coin. Yes, Fénelon, though so contrary, is but the other half of Pascal; and Pascal's real antagonist is Buffon—whose mind is as vast in its serene and ample surface as the spirit of the Jansenist is narrow, intense and penetrating —Buffon, who contemplates an immanent divinity in Nature, to whom Man is no mysterious and terrible enigma, but an animal among other animals, *primus inter pares*, related to all the forms of life —Buffon, in whose eyes the soul is the perfect flower of the human plant, even as the world is a rose sprung from the invisible roots of God. There is an irreductible antinomy between the Jansenist and the naturalist. To Pascal, the world exists only as a place of ordeal for the individual soul, while in the eyes of Buffon the species alone, the type, is precious to Nature, "so careless of the single life"—and Humanity itself, in all its amplitude and its succession, is but a detail of her sovereign order.

"Engendrée un matin, à bord d'un vaisseau qu'elle n'a pas vu partir et qu'elle ne verra pas arriver—passagère agitée sur cette terre qu'elle ne dirige pas—l'Humanité n'a pas de loi qui la lie nécessairement au grand système extérieur. Qu'elle se remue à fond de cale ou sur le pont, qu'elle se précipite à la poupe ou à la proue, cela ne change rien à la marche immuable: elle est, en un mot, comme une quantité négligible par rapport à l'ordre souverain du reste de l'Univers."

"Grandeur de l'Ame humaine!" cried Pascal. To him the human soul was great, was grand, only as an avenue that approached eternity, and as an affluent of God. To Buffon the human soul was grand and mighty here and now; he was always exclaiming: *πολλὰ τὰ δεῖνα.* "L'homme pense (said Buffon) et dès lors il est le maître des êtres qui ne pensent pas!" And the lord of creation appears to him no feeble "roseau pensant." What marvels has he not achieved! He is the master of brutes and birds; the fish in the depth of the sea exist to feed him; he is the transformer of vegetable life, which he renews, augments, diminishes, varies, and multiplies at his own pleasure; he is the master of metals, which he snatches from their quiet death in the bowels of the earth and fires into a strange new life in the flames of his furnaces, communicating to them a part of his own mind and activity. And Buffon said: "L'esprit humain n'a point de bornes; il s'étend à mesure que l'univers se déploie. L'homme peut donc et doit tout tenter; il ne lui faut que du temps pour tout savoir. Il pourrait même, en multipliant ses observations, prévoir tous les phénomènes avec autant de vérité et de certitude que s'il les déduisait immédiatement des causes."

Buffon was the forbear and precursor of all those who think they see, behind a shifting variability of species, a certain unity in Nature, an indescribable parentage allying stone and tree and wing and hand. He believed in the transformation of species, under the influence of climate, nourishment, breeding and domesticity; and the power of man over Nature seemed to him so great that the sole faculty he had as yet to acquire was that of absolute creation—

"Le blé, par exemple, est une plante que l'homme a changée au point qu'elle n'existe nulle part dans l'état de nature; on voit bien qu'il a quelque rapport avec l'ivraie, avec les gramens, les chiendents, et quelques autres herbes des prairies, mais on ignore à laquelle de ces herbes on doit le rapporter; et, comme il se renouvelle tous les ans, et que, servant de nourriture à l'homme, il est de toutes les plantes celle qu'il a le plus travaillée; il est aussi, de toutes, celle dont la nature est le plus altérée. L'homme peut donc non seulement faire servir à ses besoins, à son usage, tous les individus de l'univers, mais il peut encore, avec le temps, changer, modifier, et perfectionner les espèces; c'est même le plus beau droit qu'il ait sur la Nature."

In Buffon's view of the world there is an optimism, a detachment, a serenity, an Olympian calm, which recall the mind of Goethe. That universe of his, in which life and death are constantly shifting, playing one into the other—that vast dance of forces and molecules in which the individual is nothing—is strangely modern; Buffon's whole work is a sort of

epic of the conservation of energy. If some of his pages appear contemporary with Huxley and Haeckel, there are others that offer themselves as columns for the temple of a Tolstoi—so absolute is their indifference to individual life, their disdain of death, their certainty of the immediate reincarnation (or at least revival) of every particle that lives and breathes and grows. The ideas of Buffon (although his name was superannuated and derided) entered into the very substance of the nineteenth century. But since then the wheel of science has revolved again, and to-day, perhaps, the mysterious universe of Pascal appears less old-fashioned than the majestic order of Buffon's sovereign cosmos.

Buffon was not only a philosopher. His systems have had their little day; his hypotheses share the common fate of those useful but temporary scaffoldings raised by the imagination. He has left other and enduring structures: his ideas on the distribution of animals over the surface of the globe—ideas which, in the phrase of his great adversary, Cuvier, were "de véritables découvertes"; he has bequeathed us a *Natural History* which owes its vitality no less to the style and genius of its author than to the fact that it was in all honesty a "*recueil d'expériences et d'observations*." And, above all, he created a magnificent instrument for the study of Life under all its aspects and in all its forms—the curiosities and transformations of vegetable life all over the world; a cabinet of rare minerals; speci-

mens of birds and beasts and fishes:—in a word the first museum and garden of Natural History—the Jardin des Plantes.

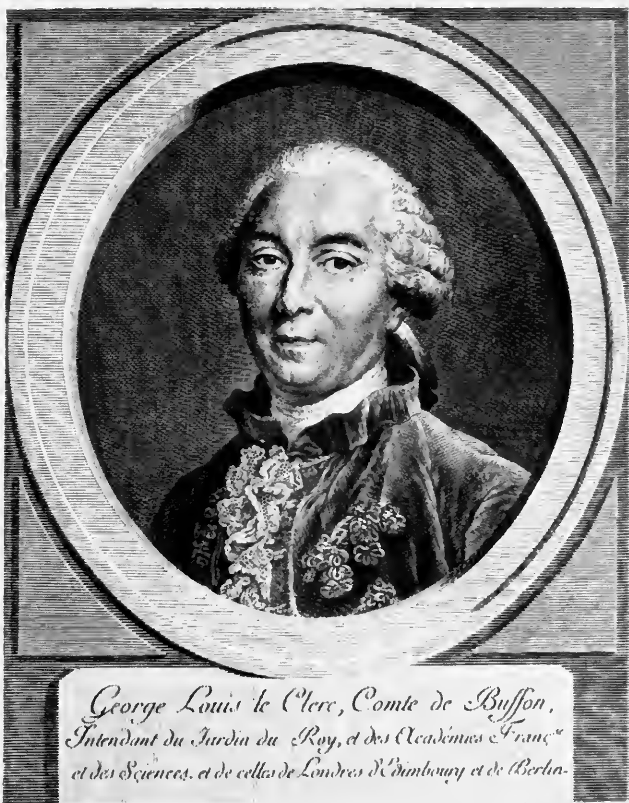
II

There were no Botanical Gardens in France before the sixteenth century. Until then the herb garden occupied a corner of the *potager;* violet and tansy, borage, mint and poppy, grew cheek by jowl with cabbage-rose and carrot, in the kitchen garden of castle, manor-house or farm. The Renaissance, with its infinite curiosity, with its love of ornament and sense of beauty, gave a new value to the garden of plants. Curious blossoms were sought after to serve as models for fancy work, and the "brodeur" of Gaston d'Orléans established a garden of rare flowers at Blois. Under the double influence of art and medicine there was founded in Paris in 1570 a *Jardin des Simples* which became in 1626, under Louis XIII—or rather under Richelieu, the Royal Garden of medicinal plants.

It was at first a herbary for simples and *tisanes.* Since the King's physician, Guy de la Brosse, had a passion for botany, the garden flourished; rare plants were sent to it from far and wide, and the wise amateur of bud and leaf gave not alone his knowledge and his time, but his own country house and grounds—a little to the east of Paris as then the city stood—to ensure the perfection of the Royal

Garden. But Guy de la Brosse having paid the debt of nature, the Jardin du Roi fell into the hands of a series of Court doctors with no peculiar turn for science, and dwindled to a desert of dust and disorder. A garden with never a statue nor a piece of ornamental water had scant attraction for the brilliant generation of Louis XIV. Sometimes a great lady would send there in search of some rare flower for her fancy work; sometimes a doctor would stroll thither to compare some curious herb; but the garden was no longer any man's hobby. And yet it pursued its fate. In 1645 a royal edict decreed that three doctors in medicine should hold their classes there "pour y faire aux écoliers la démonstration de l'intérieur des plantes." Fifty years later, with Buffon and the Jussieus, a race of great botanists was born. With the second quarter of the eighteenth century, students of natural history in France turned their attention to the long-neglected Jardin du Roi, began to dream of the chemistry of vegetable life, and to study the organic substance of those plants which hitherto they had grown as herbs to dry in bunches, or grains to bray in a mortar.

In 1732 the King's physician, Dr. Chicoisneau, had just died, leaving behind him a wilderness, a little east of Paris. The Académie des Sciences rose to the occasion, and, pointing out the scandal of such disorder, suggested that the post be taken from the hands of the doctors, and confided to a man of science. The chemist Dufay, an Acade-



BUFFON

mician and a student of Newton (whom he had visited in England), was chosen as director. A man of forty years of age, he was full of plans and projects when, suddenly stricken by a fatal illness, on his deathbed he designated as his successor Buffon. It was in 1739. Buffon was a young man of property and parts—the son of old M. Leclerc of Montbard in Burgundy, Laird of Buffon. He was, perhaps, better known for his taste in landscape gardening and his knowledge of geometry and physics than for any special aptitude for botany, but he was already a member of the Académie des Sciences, he was engaged on a translation of Newton, had travelled in England as well as in Italy (whither he had accompanied the Duke of Kingston), and was acquainted with the experimental method. He appeared a respectable candidate, but not an eminent one, and probably would never have been appointed Intendant, or Steward, of the Garden but for a friendly piece of wire-pulling, such as, under all *régimes*, has been customary in France.

Buffon was eager for the place. He wrote to his friend Hellot, the chemist, his colleague at the Académie des Sciences, a good-natured man. While deploring the loss of the defunct Dufay, "qui a fait des choses étonnantes pour le Jardin du Roi," Buffon admitted, with ingenuous egoism, that he thought he himself might manage just as well: "J'aurais grand plaisir à lui succéder dans cette place. . . . Si on faisait réflexion, on sentirait que

l'intendance du Jardin du Roi demande un jeune homme actif qui se connaisse en plantes et qui sache la manière de les multiplier." . . . Buffon, the stately Buffon, is here as modest as an under-gardener seeking for a situation.

Doubtless Hellot smiled. He was aware of that which Buffon (just home from his travels in England) could not know: the place had been promised to another Academician, named Duhamel, fortunately absent. Hellot made short work of Duhamel's claims. He sat down and wrote at his own bureau a touching letter, purporting to be dictated by the unfortunate Dufay upon his deathbed, recommending the claims of Buffon, to M. de Maurepas, the King's Minister. He put the letter in his pocket, along with that received from Buffon, and hurried to the house of the dying Intendant. Dufay still had breath in him; from conviction, indifference or fatigue he yielded to his colleague's eloquence; and, propped up in bed, signed the letter.

And the touching legend spread that the Garden occupied his latest thought, and that he bequeathed it to the tender care of Buffon.

"Il fit son testament" (writes Fontenelle), "dont c'était presqu'une partie qu'une lettre qu'il écrivit au Ministre, M. de Maurepas, pour lui indiquer celui qu'il croyait le plus propre à lui succéder dans l'intendance du Jardin royal. Il le prenait dans l'Académie des Sciences, à laquelle il souhaitait que cette place fût toujours unie; et le choix de M. de Buffon, qu'il proposait, était si bon que le Roi n'en a pas voulu faire d'autre."

Thus, thanks to Hellot, by ruse and partiality, yet fortunately for the future, on the 1st of August, 1739, Buffon was named Intendant du Jardin et du Cabinet du Roi.

"Que dites vous de l'aventure de Buffon?" wrote his friend, the President des Brosses, to a common acquaintance.

"Je ne sache pas avoir eu de plus grande joie que celle que m'a causée sa bonne fortune, quand je songe au plaisir que lui a fait ce Jardin du Roi! Combien nous en avons parlé ensemble! Combien il l'a souhaité! Et combien il était peu probable qu'il l'eût jamais, à l'âge qu' avait Dufay!"

III

For close on fifty years Buffon reigned supreme in the Jardin du Roi, and during that half-century it remained a garden of plants; a museum of minerals, a collection of stuffed birds and beasts; neither live lion nor breathing serpent dwelt in that Eden. But within its chosen limits of botanical grounds, and museum thereunto attached, the garden was transfigured. Despite Dufay's improvements (which indeed he had scarcely had time to begin), Buffon found it a poor place enough—an old sixteenth-century country house with two wings jutting forward in pavilions, a few greenhouses and

sheds, the grounds themselves of no great extent, and sorely hedged in and limited by the estates of the Abbaye de St. Victor. In the château, where Dufay had indeed commenced several embellishments, the Royal Cabinet of Natural History consisted of two rooms, one for the herbarium and one for the storage of medicinal plants. A vast depository of dried herbs for the *tisanes* of Versailles, the cabinet still bore some resemblance to the store cupboards of an apothecary's shop. The days still were when Rousseau could write in his Notes on Regnault: "La plupart des plantes n'ont pas de noms françois, mais toutes ont un nom anglois. La raison en est que les Anglois étudient et aiment la botanique, et s'en font à la campagne une récréation charmante, au lieu que les François ne la regardent que comme une étude d'apothicaire et ne voient dans l'émail des prairies que des herbes pour les lavemens."

Buffon at once suppressed the private apartments of the Court physicians (who had a sort of country house in the Garden of Plants), with a view to enlarging his domain, and in the new space at his disposal began to arrange the collections of natural objects, which year by year increased in rarity, interest, and beauty. He entered into communication with naturalists and travellers all over the earth, and by a stroke of genius created an order of Correspondents of the Garden. These botanists *in partibus* vied with each other in sending home rare specimens and herbaries. Commerson sent

from China the first hydrangea, acclimatised by Buffon at the Jardin des Plantes; the dahlia, the sweet-acorned oak, a quantity of flowers and shrubs were thus introduced into Europe; and the first plane-trees in France were grown by Buffon in his country gardens at Montbard. Commerson in China and Japan, Poivre in Mauritius and the islands of the Indian Sea, Dombey in Mexico and Peru, Magalon in Egypt, Sonnini in Guinea and Cayenne, Guys in Turkey, Asia Minor, and Greece, Lamarck in Germany and Holland, are but a few of the travellers who sent their herbals and cases of plants to the Jardin du Roi; while Faujas de St. Fond from Scotland, Guys from Hungary, the Kings of Denmark and Sweden from Scandinavia, Frederick the Great from Germany, the Empress Catherine from Russia, the Emperor Joseph from Austria, and numberless correspondents from every corner of the earth sent specimens of stones and ore. Already the vegetable and mineral kingdoms were adequately represented. And Buffon began to dream the dream of Bacon in his *Novum Organum*, and to plan a coherent whole which should unite the scattered elements of Nature, in order to form an instrument of scientific investigation such as the world had not yet known. . . . "Ce sont surtout des animaux que nous désirons beaucoup," wrote Buffon to a correspondent in Cayenne; but the difficulties of transport were too great. It was easier to obtain seeds and specimens of plants, and, above all, his "chers minéraux."

"S'il y a quelques pierres fossilisées et d'autres pétrifications à Cayenne, je souhaiterais fort en avoir, aussi bien que des échantillons des pierres à bâtir et autres de ce pays. Vous me feriez grand plaisir aussi de me dire si les montagnes de la Guyane sont fort considérables et si le grand lac de Parime, qu'on appelait le lac d'Or, est connu, si quelqu'un y a été nouvellement, et si en effet il est d'une étendue si considérable, et s'il ne reçoit aucun fleuve. Faites moi l'amitié de me marquer quelles sont les espèces de poissons les plus communes sur vos côtes et dans les rivières de cette partie de l'Inde. . . . Il y a encore un fait sur lequel je voudrais bien être éclairci, c'est à savoir s'il n'y a point de coquilles pétrifiées dans les Cordilières au Pérou. (*Correspondance de Buffon*, I. viii.)

Thus, with a brilliant, cursory, superficial eye, Buffon in his garden surveys the most distant parts of Nature, but knows no farther actual journey than from Montbard to the capital.

At Paris or in Burgundy M. de Buffon loved to live among his plants. He had built himself at Montbard a singular garden, a marvellous place—scaling the hill (on which the château stands) in fourteen terraces, from which the eye discovers a vast panorama such as Buffon loved—rivers, and the cliffs they have cut through the chalk-stone in their immemorial course; vineyards, meadows, hills cultivated to the crown, and the little clustering town of Montbard. The terraces were planted with pines and planes and sycamores, with flowers beneath the

trees, and aviaries filled full of foreign birds. And Buffon walked like Adam in his garden, ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and glanced with a roving eye across that plain which he beheld, not only in its present state, but as it had been when the central sea once spread its waves across the fields, where corn and vine now prospered in his gaze.

Buffon walked like a god in his garden—like an immortal to whom many things are permitted. He had married a beautiful wife, but she had died young, and he beguiled his widowhood in his advancing years with sometimes a platonic passion, sometimes a pretty light o' love—preferring, he said, "les petites filles aux grandes dames, parce qu'elles nous font perdre moins de temps." For the mind of M. de Buffon was constantly occupied, full of facts, full of theories, full of systems: "ma théorie sur la cause de la couleur des nègres, que j'attribue aux effets du vent d'est" (as he wrote to the President des Brosses), and his theory on the formation of the planets (fragments of the substance of the sun detached by the collision of a comet), his theory of organic molecules, which he held to be indestructible elements of life passing unimpaired from form to form and from individual to individual. For nothing was too vast and nothing too particular to arrest the serene attention of this philosopher.

If the plants flowered in Buffon's garden at Montbard as in Paris; if the theories and systems accompanied him everywhere; the collections and the

rarities were all most scrupulously reserved for the cabinets of the Jardin du Roi. When the Prince of Prussia visited Montbard, he was astonished to find there no cabinet of natural history. "Je n'ai pas d'autre que celui de Sa Majesté!" answered Buffon, who generously abandoned to the royal museum the richest collection in Europe. Sometimes, when a valuable set of specimens was to be sold, Buffon would buy it and present it, saying: "Que voulez vous? Le Jardin du Roi est mon fils ainé!" His passion for sticks and stones, his disinterested generosity, his boundless charity and care for the public weal—in fine, something large and lovable in the nature of the man—redeemed his pomposity, his love of fine words, and made "le grand phrasier" (as d'Alembert called him) one of the most popular figures in Europe. Cases would come to Paris from unknown correspondents (unbreveted at the garden) simply addressed: "A l'Historien de la Nature." And during the war with America the buccaneers and British corsairs, when they plundered the packets of the King of Spain, sent on unopened and unharmed the crates of plants and cases of minerals addressed to Buffon in his garden. And this attention of his enemies must have caused a double pleasure to the great Intendant, who inherited all Fénelon's utopias—his hatred of war, his love of peace, his belief in agriculture and the natural brotherhood of nations, his conviction that mankind should seek its laurels in a garden.

Year after year the collections of all sorts increased till they threatened to overflow the space at the Intendant's disposal, and Buffon, who had begun his career by evicting the Court physicians, saw one day no course open to him save to evict himself. It was not without regret that he left his pleasant home in the midst of his gardens and his specimens, for the poor apartment (or "galetas," as he calls it) which was all he could secure hard by in that unfashionable neighbourhood—

"Je ne m'y suis déterminé que pour donner un certain dégré de consistance et d'utilité à un établissement que j'ai fondé. Tout était entassé! Tout périssait dans nos cabinets faute d'espace! Il fallait deux cents mille livres pour nous bâtir. Le Roi n'est pas assez riche pour cela."

(Buffon au Président des Brosses, 1 Sept., 1766.)

There was a joy, which compensated this disturbance, in spreading out and classifying an array of treasures. So soon as the collections were adequately housed, Buffon rebuilt and redistributed the greenhouses, furnishing them with massive iron frames forged in the foundries that he had built and installed at Buffon. Lastly, a new amphitheatre began slowly to rise from the earth. But the direst need of all was for the expansion of the gardens—far too narrow now for their new duties, no longer restricted to the growing of medicinal herbs, but designed for the gradual acclimatisation of rare specimens and

varieties from every corner of the earth. There, as of old in the Paradise of the Talmud, all essences flourished in harmony; the pine-tree and the palm, the live oak and the Peruvian quinquina; there Daubenton's ipecacuanha and Commerson's hydrangea, for the first time in Europe, unfurled their novel buds; but all these green things of the earth needed room to spread their roots. Like King Ahab from his palace, Buffon from the windows of his cabinet, looked out and saw a piece of rich marshy land which stretched from the gardens to the Seine. This enviable estate belonged to a monastery—the Abbaye de St. Victor. From the first day of his entrance to the Jardin du Roi, Buffon intended to possess that Naboth's vineyard. But the monks proved tenacious. They liked their marshy pastures, and said they could not sell them, having no right to dispose of glebeland, which (as *mainmorte*) was possessed by no individual, or set of individuals, but entailed upon the future congregations of the abbey. Temptingly the pastures spread between the gardens and Paris, between the gardens and the Seine; while to the east of the museum stretched a wide expanse, known as the Clos Patouillet. This latter piece of land Buffon (not trusting to the parsimonious delays of the Treasury) was able to purchase in his own name, in 1778. But it took him ten years of arduous diplomacy—of endless negotiations, attentions, and courteous perseverance—ere he could bring the

Abbot of St. Victor to entertain the idea of an exchange. At last ("sans rien demander à la ville") Buffon entered into possession of his long-coveted dominion, but not without a final appeal to force. When all was signed and sealed, the monks still dallied in their abbey, treating summons after summons with masterly inertia. At last, one day of torrential rain, Buffon, the new owner, dispatched a squad of workmen and bade them demolish the building, and to begin with the roof. Before evensong "Messieurs de St. Victor" had decamped. And now the antelope grazes, the lion seeks whom he can devour, the dreamy catoblepas absent-mindedly consumes his own front paws in the cloister meadows where of old the abbey kine were wont to graze.

IV

Buffon at the Garden of Plants enjoyed the practically unlimited control of a dictator. He alone fixed every detail of the administration, settled the budget, appointed and directed professors and gardeners alike, and fixed the rate of their remuneration. Here is the formula of one of his decrees—

"Nous, George-Louis Leclerc, chevalier, comte et seigneur de Buffon et autres lieux, vicomte de Quincy, Marquis de Rougemont, l'un des quarante

de l'Académie Française, trésorier perpétuel de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Paris, des Académies de Londres, Edimbourg, Berlin, Saint-Pétersbourg, Florence, Philadelphie, Boston, etc. Intendant du Jardin et du Cabinet du Roi.

"A tous ceux qui ces présentes lettres verront, salut!

"Sur ce qu'il nous a été représenté que l'office de professeur de chimie aux écoles du Jardin du Roi, est actuellement vacant par le décès du sieur Macquer. . . .

"En conséquence et en vertu des pouvoirs à nous accordés par le Roi, de nommer et présenter à Sa Majesté tous les officiers de cet établissement, nous nous sommes dûment informé de la personne et de la capacité du Sieur Antoine-François Fourcroy, comme aussi de sa bonne vie, moeurs et religion.

"Et nous l'avons, sous le bon plaisir de Sa Majesté, nommé."

Buffon was the King of Botany, the Monarch of Natural History, a very great seigneur; yet, even in the writers most hostile to his autocratic rule, nowhere do we find a complaint against the justice, the impartiality, the wise administration of a reign that lasted nine-and-forty years.

Like all happy tyrants he was seconded by ministers judiciously selected and constantly supported. His head gardener, André Thouin, was the son of a gardener, born in the garden, and lived there nearly eighty years. Verniquet the architect was scarcely less solidly attached, and sharing the

master's enthusiasm, generously shared his pecuniary sacrifices; the garden cost its architect, as it cost its intendant, far more than ever it paid them; Buffon at his death was the King's creditor to the tune of six hundred thousand livres, or, as we say in modern parlance, francs.

In return he received not quite five hundred pounds a year (12,000 livres), but also complete liberty, regal sway, and the facility of indulging his scientific passion. We have seen him exchanging estates and raising buildings, evicting tenants (and even himself), spending the moneys he had and the moneys he had not, advancing his own fortune to the State, renewing and re-housing the collections three times in less than fifty years, enclosing his grounds with gates and handsome railings of iron forged by his own workmen at his own foundry of Buffon. His correspondence with André Thouïn shows him inquiring into the minutest item of repairs, deciding the thickness of a garden wall or the partition of an apartment. Not a dried plant or a stuffed bird or a stone in the cabinet, not a detail of the humblest hothouse, not an engraving or a proofsheet in the *Histoire Naturelle*, but he ordered it with no less accuracy, no less expense of will, and as disinterested a passion for the public good as he bestowed on his grandest conceptions. In great and small he showed himself the man who wrote that "Genius is, in fine, a longer patience."

Intensely provincial, at bottom always mistrust-

ful of Paris and the Court, he filled his garden with Burgundians—Verniquet, Lucas, the tribe of Guineau, the troop of Daubenton. The name of Louis-Jean-Marie Daubenton is as inseparable from the fame of Buffon as that of Torricelli from Galileo, of Périer from Pascal, or, from the memory of Pasteur, the names of Duclaux and Roux.

Daubenton, his neighbour in the county, was the son of the notary at Montbard; Louis-Jean-Marie, the most gifted of a gifted family, was a young doctor of six-and-twenty practising in his native place, when, in 1742, Buffon summoned him to Paris to help him with the management of the plants and the production of the *Histoire Naturelle.* While Buffon discoursed on Nature and the development of the globe (founding the as yet unformulated idea of evolution on a basis of geology); while Buffon painted a series of brilliant decorated frescoes of the various phases of the earth with portraits of the different families of animals, "the Doctor" (as Buffon called Daubenton) added to this poem in prose an appendix of useful notes, anatomical researches and analysis. Buffon, if any man, knew his own worth. He was aware that imagination and not exactness is the true secret of science, no less than of letters; in his eyes the cautious and sceptical Daubenton remained a rather pettifogging personage. After a score of years spent in partnership he half destroyed their friendship by issuing a popular edition of the *Natural History* without the "tripaillerie" of his

colleague's anatomical plates. But the fame of the "Doctor" stood high, and increased year by year. His *Shepherd's Calendar* (an almanack for farmers, full of instructions on the management of flocks) became a classic in an age devoted to scientific agriculture, and earned for its author the name of Shepherd Daubenton. The "Doctor" had become the "*Berger*," and for close on sixty years the canny shepherd remained a popular figure. The Revolution (which was to cut off the head of Buffon's son and heir) proclaimed old Daubenton a senator, and raised a statue to the introducer of the merino sheep, the acclimatiser of the plant ipecacuanha.

V

In 1779, Buffon produced the first volumes of his *Histoire de la Nature*. "C'était un des évènements du siècle," writes Sainte-Beuve. And yet it was hardly an event in science. When Buffon, at two-and-thirty years of age, had entered, ten years before, on his duties at the Garden, he had been as yet in no sense a naturalist. Nature had made him a philosopher; education a geometrician. Patience and the experimental method were gradually to make of him a man of science.

Fortunately for him, Newton had been his master. And in his first book—in his translation of Hales—his *Statique des Végétaux*—Buffon had already written:

"C'est par des expériences fines, raisonnées et

suivies que l'on force la Nature à découvrir son secret. Toutes les autres méthodes n'ont jamais réussi, et les vrais physiciens ne peuvent s'empêcher de regarder les anciens systèmes comme d'anciennes rêveries et sont réduits à lire la plupart des nouveaux comme on lit des romans. *Les recueils d'expériences et d'observations sont donc les seuls livres qui puissent augmenter nos connaissances.*"

His garden of plants, his cabinet of minerals, his cases of stuffed animals and birds from all the world over, presented him (he thought) with unequalled opportunities for research and observation. When in 1739 (some ten years before he published the first three volumes out of thirty-six) Buffon had first decided to compose a Natural History, he meant it to be a *recueil d'expériences et d'observations*, a sort of catalogue and chronicle of the Museum and the Garden. He had as yet no conception of a great imaginative revival,—no notion that he was to renew the French Ideal. Buffon became Buffon because the book (taking the bit in its mouth, so to speak) ran away with its author's convictions, and appeared at last as no mere annals or journal of observations, but a magnificent inconclusive epic, "De Naturâ Rerum."

It is a thing to muse upon that, if Buffon had not been made Intendant, Buffon would never have written his *Histoire Naturelle;* and without Buffon can we imagine Rousseau, Bernardin de St. Pierre, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, all that great race of the sons of Nature?

The very scheme reveals imagination rather than a scientific mind. Buffon shows us mankind personified as some solitary individual, awaking in an enchanted isle or garden, and gradually comprehending his surroundings: distinguishing first of all such creatures as are necessary or useful—the horse, the dog, the ox—and then those which more constantly cross the field of his vision: the hare, the stag, the commoner birds. In this order (which he calls natural, and which we may call romantic) Buffon classifies the world of beast and bird and plant and stone. When, ten years after his appointment to the Garden, the first volumes of his *Natural History* were given to the world, amidst the chorus of admiration which their style and genius naturally evoked, there were some murmurs of surprise or disapproval from Buffon's colleagues at the Académie des Sciences. For Réaumur and Linnæus were busy at that very time with a very different system of classification. The sexual system of the Swede, and the vast ideas which it suggested, were changing the conceptions of men of science in Europe. But Buffon apparently had never heard of Linnæus. He had sins of commission, too, and the peculiar mild malignity of Academicians was stimulated by Buffon's statement that "oxen shed their horns in their third year," as by his refusal to class the ass in the equine tribe, out of a feeling of respect for the horse. There was for some time a quarrel between the "populace of natural-

ists" (as he called them) and M. de Buffon, who, for his part, could not understand their extraordinary attention to details. Why should Réaumur spend years in studying the life of insects? Is an insect noble? Is an insect interesting? "Car enfin une mouche ne doit pas tenir plus de place dans la tête d'un naturaliste qu'elle n'en tient dans la Nature!" Infinitely sensitive to infinite grandeur, Buffon was not by nature accurate or observant; his shortsighted eyes were blind to detail; he possessed that comprehensive turn of mind which conceives the general more easily than the particular, revels in the sense of sequence, and notices less the constitution of any part than its relation to the other factors of a whole. But he was, as Sainte-Beuve has remarked with his usual sagacity, "un grand esprit éducable." The Garden and the Natural History were to prove the educators of his patient mind.

The defect in Buffon's scientific equipment which chiefly shocked his contemporaries—his mistrust and ignorance of classification—is less displeasing to ourselves. Men of science in our times are wont to admit that, if they classify, it is in obedience to an inherent law of our intellect, which cannot conceive things clearly unless they be distributed in categories; our savants know their orders to be artificial, a convention imposed from without upon the magnificent anarchy of the universe; they consider their catalogues provisional and hypothetic. We are all nominalists to-day. But Linnæus, but

Réaumur, would have gone to the stake for their classes. Beyond these lists and families, far behind them, Buffon, alone among the men of those days, had a glimpse, a dim inkling of something all-pervading, infinitely one, yet malleable and diverse, constantly transformed and shifting, which is Nature. And therein for us lies his superiority. He saw, he felt, the One-in-All.

Yet in cataloguing his specimens at the Garden, Buffon perceived the advantages of these classifications which he could not bring himself to accept as ultimate truths; and (owing, it is true, to the persistent advocacy of Jussieu) the systems of Linnæus and Réaumur were finally adopted by their great adversary. At last the eyes of Buffon, always a little dim and dazzled from too long gazing on the whole, learned to observe, learned to revere, the infinitely little no less than the infinitely great, so that the Garden, which began by converting its keeper into a writer on Natural History, ended by making him, in word and in deed, a Naturalist.

VI

Long before this, from his terrace at Montbard the eye of M. de Buffon had dropped one day on the convent garden of the little town below. A young girl walked there. So it happened that Buffon at five-and-forty years of age married a

girl of twenty, beautiful, nobly-born and poor, who had entered the convent because she had no dowry. Relegated to that sacred refuge, but free, having pronounced no vows, she first set eyes on Buffon in 1750, and two years later he carried her up the hill to his castle of Montbard, in defiance of his indignant relatives. . . . Madame de Buffon was a happy wife. She loved her husband with a sort of passion of admiration and respect; gentle, quiet, equable, stately, she moved along her terraces as sedately as under the clipped alleys of her convent close below. But she died young, leaving Buffon a widower, with an only son, a child of five. The future of this little lad—"Buffonet" as his father called him—was thenceforth a constant anxiety to the great naturalist, who had not spared his own fortune to enrich the King's Garden. "Le Jardin du Roi est mon fils ainé," he loved to say—and now the Garden had a younger brother.

The simplest solution appeared to be to look on the Garden as a fief, a sort of hereditary kingdom. If the state owed M. de Buffon a matter of six hundred thousand livres, it would be no great affair if "Buffonet" should succeed to Buffon and carry on his father's interest in the concern. "Buffonet" would complete the buildings, continue to advance the necessary moneys; and, as not only his father's son but his pupil, would inherit, if not the genius of Buffon, at least his experience, his scientific authority, his knowledge of affairs.

With this end in view, the great naturalist had

spared no pains in the scientific education of his only son, an amiable mediocre youth, who had travelled with Lamarck, visiting in his company the principal botanical establishments of Europe. Nor could any director hope to know the Garden better than this young man, who had spent his childhood there; who had nearly set fire to the great hothouse one night when, in company with young Lucas, he had organised there a clandestine sparrow hunt by torchlight; whose escapades had made him the terror and the darling of the gardeners. But the Ancien Régime never discovered Napoleon's axiom, "Find me the man who suits the place, not the man whom the place would suit." The brevet rank of such preferments was usually awarded to some favourite at court. Buffon had never been assiduous at Versailles, and, during a longer absence than usual, caused by an illness in 1771, Louis XV allowed himself to listen to a mediocre Mæcenas, such as sovereigns love: an Academician of agreeable nullity, a certain Comte de la Billarderie d'Angiviller, who, on his own admission, had only "les connaissances superficielles d'un homme du monde." He was, however, a man of tact and amenity. Made aware of the despair and indignation of Buffon when, on his recovery, he learned this fine arrangement, the Brevet-Intendant wrote to him such a letter as only a gentleman could write. In 1771 "Buffonet" was a child; M. d'Angiviller was forty years of age; he therefore proposed, while maintaining his claim to the "survivance" of Buffon, to adopt Buffonet as his

own future successor. "Si M. votre fils s'attachait aux sciences je lui ferais avoir la survivance de la place si dignement remplie par son père." M. d'Angiviller thus would fill the post *ad interim* and act as a sort of guardian to young Buffon. In addition, as a compensation (for the "survivancier" received half the emoluments of the post to which he was appointed), the King raised the fief of Buffon into a county, and offered the new Count a privilege at court. Buffon was sensitive to the appeal of rank. The affair seemed settled. Unfortunately, M. d'Angiviller had a brother—a brother who took an interest in nature and science, according to the fashion of the age. By what court intrigue we know not, the "survivance" of the "survivancier" was attributed to him, and Buffonet in the end was defrauded of his inheritance.

In these intrigues and businesses time sped on, increasing with every year the fame of Buffon. That sentimental age loved him the more for the known kindness of his heart, and for his open pocket. It was said that any working man in France out of employment might earn his bread at the Garden of Plants, with a decent wage, in any season of the year. In his forges and foundries and pine forests of Buffon; in his improvements and buildings at the Jardin du Roi; on his estate at Montbard, where he had caused a magical garden to scale the steep and arid faces of the rock, the great naturalist had opened a series of national workshops which he maintained for more than fifty years.

To those who expressed their astonishment that he should cultivate the unfertile soil of Montbard, he admitted—

"Mes jardins ne sont qu'un prétexte pour faire l'aumône."

Such was the man who had made of the King's herb garden a laboratory for the study of Nature; who, first among men, had sought to explain the origins of our Earth and her successive transformations; who had described the life on her surface and the constitution of her depth, and who had shown how man had disposed of her varied riches in the interests of his own power and happiness. Larger and loftier in mould than Montesquieu or Diderot, who, for mere shrewdness of intelligence, rank as his equals, Buffon has, for sheer grasp and capacity of mind, no rival save Voltaire and Rousseau; with them he dominates the eighteenth century in France. And he reigned from a throne of genius, charity, and knowledge. He knew it; perhaps he knew it too well. His innocent pomposity irritated his contemporaries, and though Marmontel averred "son paisible orgueil ne fait de mal à personne," Diderot and the encyclopedists jibed at his calm fatuity, his regal style, and mocked the frills of costly lace that he donned at wrists and throat before sitting down to his *Histoire Naturelle*. But the younger, the deeper, the more thoughtful spirits loved him.

And it fell out one autumn day at Montbard, in 1770, that a traveller quaintly attired as an

Armenian stopped at the castle gate at Montbard and asked to be shown the sanctuary of M. de Buffon, who at that time was absent. An intimate of the castle led him up the steep flight of fourteen terraces which the Master of the Gardens always used to scale at dawn (shutting the fourteen iron gates behind him with a sonorous clang, as though he loved the echo raised by the metal forged in his own furnaces at Buffon). At last the Armenian and his guide reached the bare hall, adorned only with a fine engraved portrait of Newton, in which the naturalist was wont to work. Here the visitor stopped in the doorway, gazed round him fervently, clasped his hands, and, dropping to his knees, embraced the threshold. The name of this worshipper at a sanctuary was none other than Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the most eminent of Buffon's disciples, —at that time a constant visitor at the Jardin des Plantes, an organiser of botanical excursions in the woods of Montmorency, which he ransacked for rare specimens in company with the younger Jussieu and André Thouin the gardener.

VII

When Buffon was asked how he had carried through a scheme so tremendous as the *Histoire Naturelle*, he smiled and answered, "By sitting at my writing-table for fifty years." But there comes

an end to the best prolonged activity. On April 15, 1788, Buffon died. The singular chance which had accompanied all his life was manifest in the hour of his departure. He died on the eve of the Revolution—in that charming, fleeting season when the prosperity of France appeared to be renewed by the return to Nature and the practice of agriculture. Buffon could not have imagined the Reign of Terror.

The Revolution proved not unkind to Buffon's "eldest son," the Garden; the Convention reformed and improved its staff of teachers. Buffon, who had done so much to organise and administrate the Jardin du Roi, had paid but scant attention to the body of professors; at his death there were but three of them, with three demonstrators, for all the branches of Natural History—and one of the three was a professor of flower-painting. When death at last removed Buffon from his garden, the more liberal spirits, with Daubenton at their head, demanded reform: Buffon should have no successor! One day, lecturing at the College of France, Daubenton had taken for his text a page of his old friend's *Histoire Naturelle:* "The lion is the king of beasts!" he began. But he stopped short, and thundered: "Nay, in the wise world of beasts there is no king!" And, at the Garden, he desired no monarch.

In 1791 the Intendant, M. d'Angiviller's scientific brother, emigrated to England, and for some twelve

months the Garden was left without an administrator. During that season, how many schemes for its future were debated, of nights, round the gardener André Thouin's kitchen fire! Thouin and Daubenton dreamed of twelve professors, all equal in rank and reputation, under a director chosen from their body and re-elected every year—schemes which the King refused to sanction, but which the Convention was to make realities some two years later, in June 1793. Meanwhile André Thouin was laying out the grounds in beautiful mazes and gardens, such as his master had loved, making of the place the popular resort it has ever since continued. On the fine summer nights of 1791 the Parisians used to stream across the bridge, quitting Paris on the brink of revolution for this green paradise. For the patriots of the hour the real hero of the Jardin des Plantes was Thouin. The wise gardener, born in the precincts of the gardens, son of a delver of the soil, man of science, and man of the people still, appears against the stormy horizons of those times as a survival of an earlier age. In his roomy, smoke-embrowned kitchen, where mistress and maids came and went in snowy caps and fichus, Rousseau and Malesherbes had often sat, bringing their rare specimens, or begging seedlings from the great horticulturist. Artists and patriots admired the Swiss valley which he was beginning to lay out between the mountain of Sainte Geneviève and the Seine. Members of the Legislative Assembly, weary with their labours,

heart-sick at the persistence of famine, came to rest by that ample hearth and to question the worthy Thouin as to the value of potato flour and such-like foreign food-stuffs. After Parliament, on fine summer evenings, they would cross the bridge and sit on the terrace, among the orange-trees in pots; and, in the colder season, round the kitchen fire under the mantel, they might find Van Spaendonck the flower-painter, Méhul the musician, the illustrious Bernardin de St. Pierre, Ducis the tragic poet, and other men of mark. The months ran on and still the Garden was left without a nominal head. The professors hoped, with every show of reason, that Daubenton would obtain the post, and carry out their reforms. But in the eyes of the court Daubenton was something of a Jacobin, and the King had determined not to sanction what he thought a revolutionary measure. Louis XVI (who liked Nature) had read a recent nature-study, a masterpiece in its way. In July 1792 he wrote to the Minister of the Interior that "on account of the prolonged absence of M. de la Billarderie he had decided to name a new Intendant of the Garden and Cabinet of Natural History: 'C'est M. Bernardin de St. Pierre, l'auteur des *Etudes de la Nature* et de *Paul et Virginie*. Ses livres sont d'un honnête homme, et ses talents le désignent à mon choix comme un digne successeur de Buffon.'" This was one of the last acts of an expiring monarchy.

VIII

It is difficult to describe the stupefaction of the professors at the Garden. They had considered Buffon too literary, too little of a chemist or a botanist, they were in full reaction against his tradition, and Antoine de Jussieu had recently introduced into the cabinets the classifications and nomenclature of Linnæus (the great rival of the founder), which Broussonnet was beginning to apply to zoology. They were full of utilitarian schemes; a great part of the Garden was given over to experiments on the potato, which, though already a common and popular article of diet in England—Rousseau remarks the fact with some surprise—was at that time still pronounced uneatable in the provinces of France. The savants at the Garden were engaged in producing a series of seedlings adapted to the different geological districts of the kingdom, where it was hoped that an ameliorated variety might in some degree replace the failing crops of corn. No project could be more useful, for France was in a state of famine. This was but one of a series of similar schemes, for Broussonnet was experimenting on different sorts of mulberry-trees, for paper, or the silk trade. He dreamed of establishing in the Garden a school of rural economy, or agronomical institute. The utilitarian spirit of the Revolution animated these men of science; man, not

Nature, was the object of their researches; or, if they still loved Nature, it was no longer mystically or sentimentally as a divine whole, but as an immense, as yet unclassified, storehouse, out of which it was possible to fetch endless discoveries profitable to humanity. Observation, experiment, utility, were their three watchwords. They mistrusted general ideas and the deductions of philosophers, and perhaps they were right. The pages of Buffon (or even of Diderot) may seem to us now extraordinarily modern, almost in line with the subsequent discoveries of Lamarck and Darwin and De Vries. But these are the vague and lambent lightnings of philosophy, illuminating vast districts of the mind, but revealing nothing exactly as it is. General ideas may announce a great discovery, they do not really advance it, unless they inspire experiment and proof. Linnæus and Réaumur, with their narrower but exact intelligences, nay even Daubenton, though almost devoid of the gifts of expression, were probably at least as useful to science and the pursuit of truth as Buffon with his genius and abiding generalities. The Doctor, with his wise ironical smile and desire to see and touch before he surmised, used to irritate his sublime compatriot; but, although imagination alone can divine the laws of science, it is not necessary that the man who verifies and applies them should have a wide mental horizon, a vast philosophic outlook; it is only needful that he should fix very clearly and very attentively the series of facts

on which he concentrates his mind. Daubenton was the real naturalist; and the professors of the Garden were justified in resenting the appointment of a man of words and ideas, when they required a man of facts and proofs, as their Director at the Garden of Plants.

Great was the surprise of these worthy men of science on finding that they possessed in Bernardin de St. Pierre an excellent administrator, diligent, economical, exact. Like many idealists, Bernardin was practical to the verge of avarice, and (though, as an individual, eternally hat in hand, extorting favours from all who represented place or power) he was, as a civil servant, too just to profit even by the perquisites of his post:—a miser is nearly always sensitive on the point of rectitude. Impeccable, scrupulous, yet alert (where the interests of the Garden were concerned), Bernardin profited by that hour of discovery and disorganisation—magnificent opportunity for a shrewd collector!—to secure such objects and curiosities of natural history as served to complete the National Cabinet in Paris. One day in September 1792 he went to Versailles—then desolate, deserted—on the look-out for rare specimens; and there in the Park he saw, no cabinet of curiosities, but a small menagerie of six animals: a rhinoceros, a bubalus, a quagga, a Senegalian lion living in society with a hound, and a tufted pigeon from the island of Banda. The keeper suggested a massacre of these rare animals, who, stuffed,

might figure in the Cabinet in Paris. But Bernardin dreamed again the dream of Buffon: "Ce sont sourtout des animaux que nous désirons beaucoup," and determined to profit by an opportunity such as Buffon had never met with—to transport the creatures, living, into the beautiful garden recently designed by André Thouin and to complete a place for the general study of Nature, a synthesis of the earth, where painters, writers, men of science might resort "s'ils ont à représenter des sites d'Asie, d'Afrique et d'Amérique." With pen and tongue he promulgated his idea, until he converted the leaders of the Convention. The professors at the Garden were less enthusiastic. The first scheme of Bernardin had been to plant the grounds with sacred groves and statues of great men; when he filled them with beasts in pens: the lion from Rouen Fair, the dromedaries of the Prince de Ligny and the bubalus and the quagga—he seemed but a decorative sort of dreamer to the utilitarian Daubenton and his colleagues.

But Bernardin had other merits, which they did not deny him. He entered into their ideas with intelligence and respect. Although jealous of his prerogatives, he exercised them with justice and magnanimity. He refused to appoint a successor to Daubenton, whose great age and frail health at last compelled him to retire, suggesting a competitive examination before a jury of men of science, as the likeliest way to open a career to real merit:

"C'est le seul moyen de couper tous les fils de l'intrigue, qui ne sont pas moins nombreux dans le nouveau régime que dans l'ancien." His commentary on the budget of the Jardin des Plantes, addressed to the Minister, Roland, is, of all the documents that we possess to-day relating to the national Garden, that which gives the clearest idea of its equipment and resources. Bernardin, while content to put up with many deficiencies (the grounds were lighted by five lamp-posts with oil lamps and one lantern for the hothouses), insists on what is really required for the scientific purpose of the Garden, and asks that his greenhouses and tanks be well repaired. Above all he demands the creation of a "grande bibliothèque de livres d'histoire naturelle." Thus (no less than the Zoological Gardens) the fine library of the Museum was inaugurated by the author of *Paul et Virginie*.

Perhaps, indeed, the Garden owed the continuation of its existence to the diplomatic tact of the wily Norman. The year of Bernardin's directorship was a terrible year—the year of the King's execution, of the September massacres, of the rising in La Vendée—the year of the Reign of Terror. And in August 1902 the officers of the Garden were suspected of a lack of "civisme." It was supposed that they were aristocrats. Had not the underwarden of the grounds forbid his underlings to join in the riots of the Revolution? The situation was serious, even for Bernardin. It is amusing and a

little piteous to watch his efforts to prove his own patriotism while enlightening his legislators as to the advantages of culture—while endeavouring to persuade them that the State might reap a benefit from the possession of a museum and a garden. It is always a little difficult to convince a democracy of the necessity of pure science. This is how Bernardin excused himself, as a savant, from regular attendance at the "Section," or local council, of the quarter of the Gobelins. We can imagine Ernest Renan reading, or even writing, such a page—

"La Nature a distribué inégalement les talents et les devoirs parmi les hommes, afin d'entretenir entre eux l'harmonie sociale. Les uns sont destinés pour les tranquilles bureaux, d'autres pour les tribunes orageuses. Le civisme d'un homme de lettres est dans son cabinet. . . . C'est dans la solitude que Fénelon et Jean-Jacques ont produit leurs immortels écrits qui ont parlé, non seulement à leur pays et à leur siècle, mais au genre humain et à la postérité. Si Fénelon ne s'etait occupé que des intérêts de son diocèse, et Jean-Jacques que de ceux de Génève, la Révolution de l'empire francais serait encore à faire. La section d'un ami des hommes, c'est l'Univers!"

Dazzled by the reflection that, if Fénelon had never written, there would have been no Revolution, the *sans-culottes* of the Section des Gobelins awarded a certificate of civism to the naturalists of the Garden; while, for an expiatory victim, they sent to the scaffold the son and heir of Buffon. In

July 1794 they cut off his head, nine days before the fall of Robespierre. The unfortunate young man had embraced with ardour the ideas of the Revolution, and scarcely could believe in his ill-luck. The son of so illustrious a father, the bridegroom of Betzy Daubenton: could life be snatched from him at the moment when he prized it most? As he mounted the steps of the guillotine, he cried aloud in a steady voice from his place of death: "Citoyens, je me nomme Buffon!" But the knife fell. And the State was freed from the presence of a considerable creditor.

The Garden, the elder son of Buffon, had devoured the younger brother, Buffonet.

IV

LAMARTINE AND ELVIRE

"J'aimais avec la pure ferveur de l'innocence passionnée une personne angélique."—LAMARTINE.

1. *Lettres d'Elvire à Lamartine.* Par RENÉ DOUMIC. Hachette. 1905.
2. *Lamartine, Elvire. Documents inédits.* Par LÉON SÉCHÉ, Mercure de France. 1905.
3. *Méditations poétiques. Raphaël. Lamartine, par lui-même. Le Manuscrit de ma mère.* Par LAMARTINE.
4. *Les Poèmes du Souvenir.* Par ANATOLE FRANCE. Pelletan. 1908.

IV

LAMARTINE AND ELVIRE

If Musset—the passionate and mocking Musset—stands in France for the counterpart of Byron, may we not consider Lamartine the French for Shelley? No poet has touched like these two those dim mysterious confines of the soul where the One becomes the All, and the moment is caught up into eternity. What mighty poets they would be, did not something diffuse and unreal, garrulous and negligent, deteriorate the exquisite quality of their best! They lack judgment and reason. They enchant, ravish, inspire; let us not ask them to support, direct, or control. Yet either thought himself endowed with a mission and a message to correct the miserable destinies of men. If Shelley had lived, he might well, like Lamartine, have ended as a popular tribune and political reformer—a sort of Operatic Rienzi. For they took the scene of our human activities for a Cloudcuckootown, and the promptings of their humanitarian enthusiasm were doomed to remain devoid of effect.

With a like facility and abundance, a freshness of ecstasy unparalleled, either expressed the gospel of idealist universalism. They were a moment in the mind of Europe. What were 1820 without

Shelley and Lamartine? Despite his vagueness, the one remains the greatest philosophical lyrist which the nineteenth century can boast in England, even as the other was the sole religious poet—the only psalmist—which the same period produced in France.

Lamartine is religious by a native aspiration of the soul, as naturally as the sparks fly upwards—religious, but not virtuous, as he himself remarked in a mood of grandiloquent sincerity—

"Des cris d'adoration s'échappent de ma poitrine presque à chacune de mes respirations. Ce sentiment, naturel, constant, passionné, de la grandeur, de la présence, de l'ubiquité de Dieu, est la base fondamentale de cet instrument que la nature a mis dans ma poitrine: harpe ou âme, c'est la même chose! Ce sentiment, cet hymne perpétuel qui chante involontairement en moi, ne m'a pas rendu plus vertueux; la vertu est un effort, et je n'aime pas l'effort; mais il m'a rendu plus adorateur. Adorer, selon moi, c'est vivre."

This mood of adoration, which is the special quality and grandeur of his verse, is indeed the very depth and spring of his nature—but for a chance encounter, it might have remained a hidden depth! How many of us need a well-finder! If no rod strike the barren rock, how often the fountain dwindles imprisoned beneath the dust and granite of the mountain! Lamartine would in any case have been a poet, a great poet. He would have written, no doubt, the *Dernier Chant de Childe Harold*, his political hymns, the *Chant d'Amour*,

and the *Harmonies*. If he had not met with a woman—herself neither a saint nor a mystic, nor even a religious woman, but just a sensitive passionate soul drinking deep of life and death—without Elvire, in fine, would he have expressed in unequalled language the genius of Christianity? Would he have written *Le Vallon*, *Le Crucifix*, or *Jocelyn?* This debt we owe to the poor lady, who met Lamartine too late, even as she glided out of our world, and drew with her, far beyond our mortal horizons, the devoted gaze of a lover made immortal. During four times twenty years her name and place in human society, her form, her features, her character even, remained hidden from us; we knew her only as Elvire—as a mysterious veiled Egeria. But Time, which gives us up the secrets of the dead, has at last revealed the personality and published the love-letters of Julie Charles.

The service she rendered her lover by inspiring his truest poems has perhaps a set-off in the actual unpopularity of Lamartine, doubtless a result of his vague idealism. For every generation judges according to the spirit of the age. When Lamartine was young—during the fever of the Restoration, in the reaction of enthusiasm which followed the grim realities of the Revolution and a period of imperial wars—hard facts were at a discount: men had had to reckon with them too long! Notions and ideas were welcomed as manna in the desert. Such abstract intellectual perceptions, conceived without reference to experience, as inspired the muse of

Lamartine awoke a fervent response. Poet and audience were prepared alike to soar up in the blue and pluck a ray from the shining summits of the zenith! This mood of mind, which began about 1815, came to a sudden end with the cataclysm of 1848. The fires of the barricades melted the wax of Icarus' wings: the whole spirit of the public changed. Philosophy and idealism went suddenly out of fashion utterly, and their altars were appropriated to the cult of experimental science. The meditations of Lamartine appeared frothy and vain to minds trained in the rigorous discipline of natural history and physiology. Two generations of Frenchmen, during fifty years, smiled at the rhetoric which had charmed their grandfathers. Lamartine and Chateaubriand were laid on the shelf. But no one mood lasts long in the history of letters. The cult of physical science which since 1850 has swayed the mental tides of Europe may even now be doomed, in the hour of its triumph. In France at least M. Bergson, M. Le Roy, M. Péguy and their followers expect and prepare a reaction; and it is a sign of the times that so great a savant as M. H. Poincaré lends an ear indulgent, perhaps amused, and a sort of sceptical support to these underminers of the scientific position. These anti-intellectualists are seers and soothsayers who gaze beyond the regions of immediate fact. The tests of experience produce in them a mood of scepticism. Some of them, indeed, are inclined to suggest that experimental knowledge is a system of organised conventions, so

neatly dovetailed into each other as to produce an effect of apparent certitude, yet with no more real relation to the hidden sources of genius, attraction, life and death, than the elaborate mystifications of a conjurer or the artificial sequences in a game of cards. They whisper that scientific laws are the half-unconscious invention of their contrivers or discoverers; that natural science, incapable of approaching ideal truth, can never be the moral guide of man nor take the leading place in his education. The human mind (they say) deforms and alters everything it touches, giving (to what is in reality without form and void) a false aspect of a system and order; even as sea water, collected in a transparent vase, may appear a shining cube, or globe, or hexagon—but the form is the form of the vessel, eternally distinct from the vast essence of the ocean, of which it contains but a drop. In fact, the mind manipulates Truth and makes it over in a mortal image, and therefore the reality of Truth remains undiscoverable to human reason. Happily man (they continue) is a medium for other forces than his intelligence—he is inspired by feeling, instinct, faith, ecstasy, and by those blind intuitions which emanate obscurely from a subliminal self. So, right or wrong, reason these idealists; and if, as it appears sufficiently probable, the generation born during the 'eighties and the 'nineties should adopt them for leaders, Lamartine, like Pascal, may yet have his revenge and his apotheosis, and appear to our children as a guide, philosopher, and friend.

I

While we still inhabit a world which seeks to explain the character of men and things by their origin and circumstances—seeing facts in their sequence and taking account of time and place—let us continue to study our great men in their heredity and history, and strive to surprise the secret of their genius by other suppositions than the sudden, capricious influx of a supernatural force. There are plenty of documents relating to the childhood and family of Lamartine; unfortunately not one of them is wholly satisfactory. The letters and poems of his youth are too vague and loose to give a clear idea of his surroundings, while the reminiscences of his old age are often concerted and transformed by a trick of his imagination. Still, by controlling these by those, and comparing the result with the evidence of contemporaries, we may form a fair idea of the young Lamartine.

Like many poets, he owed much to his mother—the feminine strain ran strong in him. Alix des Roys was born and bred at Court, where her mother was governess to the princes of Orleans. She was a creature of great natural beauty and charm—and her dark blue eyes, dazzling skin, clustering abundant curls, high aquiline features and tall slender frame she bequeathed to her only son Alphonse, along with a passionate, vibrating sensibility, an

almost ecstatic sense of nature, a taste for grandeur and beauty. Until her wedding day, Mademoiselle des Roys had spent her summers at the Palais de Saint-Cloud, her winters in the Palais Royal, and could not imagine (she wrote later) "how any one could live anywhere save at Court." Yet on her marriage with a young gentleman of Burgundy she accepted, without a murmur or scarcely a regret, the simplest provincial life. The Major, afterwards Colonel de Lamartine, appears to have been an excellent officer, much less remarkable than his wife. Under the Terror, he, she, and their little son (Alphonse de Lamartine was born at Mâcon in October 1791) were thrown into prison—he at Mâcon, they at Autun. But the fall of Robespierre released and united the persecuted family. They returned to their small estate of Milly, in the hills near Mâcon, and lived there in great retirement, cultivating their vineyards and living by their produce. "Nous nous sommes promenés ce soir dans nos vignes en fleur," writes Madame de Lamartine in a letter, "tout l'air était parfumé par leur bonne odeur. Nos vignes sont tout notre revenu pour nous, nos enfants, nos domestiques et nos pauvres." The vineyards and sunny slopes of Milly were the earliest tutors of Lamartine.

But his childhood was not bereft of literary influence—an influence which penetrated a receptive nature. The Colonel was one of those sociable men of culture, always common in France, who love

nothing so well as to read a brilliant book aloud to an assembled family—in this case, wife, son and, successively, five little daughters. Lamartine's earliest memories recalled a beautiful mother, serious, tender and gay, half-reclining on a long red sofa of worn Utrecht velvet, one little girl on her lap, another rocked in the cradle kept incessantly in motion by a gentle impulse of the mother's foot. Meanwhile the Colonel read aloud from a handsome gilt-edged volume bound in calf. His voice was sweet and powerful. "Il l'avait beaucoup exercée dans sa jeunesse en jouant la tragédie et la comédie dans les loisirs de ses garnisons." The verse he read was eloquent and clear. It was the tragedy of "Mérope," by Voltaire. The child listened, enchanted—

"Et quand neuf heures sonnaient à la grosse horloge de noyer de la cuisine, et que j'avais fait ma prière et embrassé mon père et ma mère, je repassais en m'endormant ces vers comme un homme qui vient d'être ballotté par les vagues sent encore, après être descendu à terre, le roulis de la mer, et croit que son lit nage sur les flots."—(Préface des *Méditations*.)

But the mother sometimes took her turn at the reading, and she would choose a comedy by Molière or a fable by La Fontaine. Alphonse, with his mother's character, inherited his father's taste. Molière and La Fontaine slipped off him like water off the feathers of a duck—indeed he disliked La

Fontaine. He was, we fear, something of a little prig (he writes "j'étais né sérieux et tendre," and this is how the prig appears to himself), but there is much to be hoped from the race of little prigs, who not unfrequently turn out the most remarkable of men and women.

Twelve lines of *Athalie* or *Mérope* were more to the music-loving ear of this child than all the ravens and all the Renards that haunt the dewy thyme of the "Bonhomme's" enchanted fields and forests. Voltaire and Racine were to be his masters; he caught the secret of their fluid verse; alone of his age, he knew how to reproduce its liquid, pure and pearly music—a lost art, which he was, however, to bequeath to a tardy disciple of his own: Mistral, that neo-classic, the Virgil of Provence.

After Voltaire and Racine came other teachers—Ossian, Tasso, Fénelon, Jean-Jacques,—mild or noble ancestors of a mind essentially chivalrous and sweet, though lax and facile. Each of us, passing through a world in which manifold influences rain around him—whirling and multitudinous as the snowflakes of a storm, or the seeds of pollen of a summer hayfield—each of us bears in heart and brain one secret spot which Nature has anointed with a mysterious gum, so that whatever touches it adheres, although all outer influences drop like dust or drip like rain from every other save this one most vulnerable point. Sometimes a whole generation exudes at one centre this natural adhesive sap. The

men born in 1790 and the dozen following years retained the romantic, the passionate, the mysterious, the picturesque, even as our own age is chiefly sensible, out of all the myriad influences of the universe, to the ascendant of the physical sciences. Lamartine was a child of his times, but he wore his romance with a difference, never forgetting a sort of careless classic grace. He was more alive to ideas than his fellows, elegiac rather than passionate, suave where they were sonorous, and, instead of their sense of mystery and magic, he had an Arab's feeling for the omnipresence of the Eternal.

II

When the boy was old enough to leave his mother, she entrusted him to the Jesuits of Dijon. We know the strong and the weak points of a Jesuit education. There are two possible systems of training—to inoculate in a child's nature the qualities he lacks, or chiefly to develop the qualities he has. Could an Arnold of Rugby have informed Lamartine with the spirit of veracity? Could a Pascal have made him exact, coherent, thorough, logical? We doubt it. The Jesuits at least fostered his native excellences, kept him chivalrous and lofty-minded, and, while full of mundane elegances, yet unspotted from the world. He never lost the trace of his passage through their hands. His art was often merely decorative art—"cette musique mi-partie d'église et

d'opéra," as Sainte-Beuve put it. His ideas were expressed with a sort of amateurish grace—the art, in fact, of an "ineffectual angel." Something declamatory, something diffuse, florid and inflated, but also certain notes celestial and exquisitely pure, reveal the poet who has never passed through the bracing discipline of the public school, whose character has been formed by indulgent guides,

"Aimables sectateurs d'une aimable sagesse."

The Jesuits, at least, were innocent of any conscious attempt to form their pupil's muse. The Fathers never had good taste in poetry. Their favourites in French verse were the Père Ducerceau and Madame Deshoulières—"Aussi je n'eus pas une aspiration de poésie pendant toutes mes études classiques." Nor when he first left college,—just the usual *élève des Pères*, well dressed, honourable and brave, with no particular aptitude for anything save amusing himself—did Lamartine show the soul of a great poet. He would have made a good officer or a good *attaché*, for he knew how to represent and how to obey, but his father, who had sworn fidelity to the Bourbons, would have thought himself dishonoured if Alphonse had taken service under Bonaparte. The young man, chafing at his enforced idleness, travelled a little in Switzerland, in Italy, experienced an "affair of the heart" with a little cigar-girl at Baia, Graziella, whom his imagination was to transform into a very Miranda; and some-

times by the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, or on some steep Swiss promontory, a formless impulse of poetry, a vague indeterminate ode, would heave the breast of Lamartine and find no issue. And, other times at Milly, during the long idle winters when he sought the refuge of his father's roof, he would whittle and polish some tiny anacreontic "in the style of Tibullus, Bertin, or Parny"—for Parny was the favourite poet of those Imperial days. Napoleon was not jealous of Parny's muse, all sparklets and spangles, no more dangerous to Government than an acrobat at a fair. The despot, alert at every issue, who banished Madame de Staël and sent Chateaubriand in disgrace to Dieppe (although himself at heart a passionate Romantic, an admirer of Werther, of Ossian, and even of René), preferred a facile prettiness in the minstrels of his train. Like Plato, he banished the poets; but he protected the puerile Parnassus of a Parny, a Michaud, an Esménard, a Luce de Lancival, harmless models for such lads of twenty as love to waste a score of goose-quills on an ode. One of these was Alphonse de Lamartine.

III

Lamartine at Milly was copying out his pretty sensual little odes in a pretty little parchment album bound in green morocco when, in the spring of 1814, Napoleon fell. The face of the world changed.

The return of the Bourbons, with a slacker form of government, gave an impulse and a movement to intellectual life. "We breathed a larger air at last," wrote Madame de Staël. And Chateaubriand, after declaiming, "Je rougis en pensant qu'il me faut nasillonner à cette heure d'une foule d'infimes créatures, êtres douteux et nocturnes d'une scène dont le large soleil avait disparu," continues that the overthrow of one man's colossal dignity coincided with the revival of the dignity of man. "If despotism has given place to liberty, if men walk upright now instead of creeping, it is thanks to the Restoration."

France under Bonaparte had been a vast barracks, disciplined by a martinet, pompous and martial, with plenty of bravery, loot, and glory, little taste, less imagination, and no liberty. What a change! Soldiers and parvenus no longer dominated the scene. Political power passed into the hands of a party of ignorant country squires and deaf, decrepit *émigrés*. With the *émigrés* the ideas of London, America even, Hamburg, and the lesser German courts appeared in Paris. Combining with the revival of Catholicism, they favoured the long-pent-up expansion of the Romantic movement. With the country squires came their sons, tired of inaction, eager for office. No one, in a passive, indolent way, had been more faithful to the absent King than Colonel de Lamartine. Alphonse was named an officer in the Garde Noble of Louis XVIII, stationed at Beauvais.

The return of Napoleon from the isle of Elba interrupted the young poet's career as an officer, and now the desire of his heart was a post in diplomacy. With this end in view, young Lamartine was much in Paris. Ever thoughtless in money matters, he emptied his purse at the gaming-table while he shattered his health in idle dissipation. It came to his mother's ears that Alphonse was ruined and ill. The Colonel was absent. The devoted woman laid hands on all the sums she could collect, and set out at once for Paris with her second daughter, Eugénie. On her arrival she hesitated a moment, dared not appear, tired and travel-stained, like a provincial Nemesis, at the young man's lodgings; so, checking the impatience of her heart, she drove to a neighbouring hotel, alighting there with her daughter as though she were in Paris for her pleasure. As she sat silent in her room, combining her plans of approach and rescue, Eugénie stood at the open window, looking out at the stream of carriages which poured towards the Théâtre Français; and suddenly the girl exclaimed: "Maman, venez! Je crois bien que je vois Alphonse!"

"Je courus à la fenêtre" (wrote the devoted mother), "et je le reconnus effectivement. Il était dans un élégant cabriolet, qu'il conduisait lui-même, avec un autre jeune homme à côté de lui. Il avait l'air fort gai et fort animé, ce qui me rassura beaucoup. C'était bien lui! Toutes mes inquiétudes tombèrent à sa vue; je ne voulus plus troubler sa soirée. Je passais une assez bonne nuit."

LAMARTINE

The next day the charming lady received her son's confidence, paid his debts, and persuaded him to return with her to Milly. She was proud of her triumph. And, indeed, this was for some time his last dissipation. A new spirit seemed poured into Lamartine; but that spirit was not inspired by his mother's love alone. At Aix that autumn he made an acquaintance which decided his destiny. One day he was to write: "Il y a deux éducations pour tout homme jeune et bien doué—l'éducation de sa mère, et l'éducation de la première femme qu'il aime après sa mère. Heureux celui qui aime plus haut que lui, à son premier soupir de tendresse!"

IV

Disappointment and idleness had produced in the young Lamartine a sort of hypochondria (a liver-disease they called it), for which the doctors recommended the baths of Aix. A slender purse and a melancholy habit bade him give a wide berth to fashionable quarters, and he boarded with a doctor on the outskirts of the town. Part of the same house was let to a young lady, also sent to drink the waters: Madame Charles, the wife of an elderly member of the Institute—an old man, indeed, whose age and pursuits retained him in Paris in the apartment which he occupied at the Institute of France. Madame Charles was something of a personage

at Aix, for her husband was one of the most popular of French savants, and his name a household word. Charles was not only a great professor—Franklin and Volta had been his pupils—remarkable for the elegance of his experiments and the lucid ease of his exposition. He was a flying-man; Paris still remembered his marvellous ascent in the air during the summer of 1783. The brothers Montgolfier had been the first actually to invent the balloon; but a new invention is always incomplete. A few months after their exploit, Charles perfected their discovery by using hydrogen gas as a substitute for hot air, and a triumphant ascent had proved the superiority of his method. His celebrity had been instantaneous; it proved durable. Louis XVI lodged him in the Louvre, the Revolution made him a member of the Institute, the Emperor befriended him. A song made on him some thirty years before was not yet forgotten—

> "L'autre jour quittant mon manoir
> Je fis rencontre, sur le soir
> D'un globiste de haut parage:
> Il s'en alla tout bonnement
> Chercher un lit au firmament."

And Paris, supposed so fickle, remained faithful during more than one generation to the great professor of physics.

Charles was no dry-as-dust, but a man of the world, accomplished in mind and manners. Several portraits preserve the contour of his charming, open,

elegant features, and show us a high cheerful brow, laughing blue eyes, clear complexion, and soft, abundant white hair, light as swan's-down. He appeared the image of a liberal thinker according to the traditions of the reign of Louis XVI. Something of that *douceur de vivre* which Talleyrand said the world had lost with the Monarchy still lingered in the presence of this amiable inventor.

Unfortunately M. Charles had first seen the light so far back as 1746.

> "Der arme alte König
> Er hat eine jünge Frau."

Handsome, illustrious, and still well on the sunny side of sixty, in the year 1804 he had seemed to give as much as he got when he married—out of compassion as much as out of passion—a pretty, penniless, motherless Creole, with a drunken father, whom the bridegroom compared to Fielding's Squire Western. Yet as time slipped on it became increasingly evident that M. Charles was seventy when Madame Charles was thirty-two. It is doubtful whether to-day we should call her a beauty; Julie des Hérettes incarnated the ideal of her times. Our taste is no longer romantic and sentimental. Our age of nationalism prefers the indigenous, our habit of sport esteems the alert and wholesome, just as our ancestors admired the frail, the touching, and the foreign. In 1911 we should no doubt be moved rather than enchanted by the slim languor of

Madame Charles, the dead-white oval of her face under deep overhanging masses of waved black hair, the pinched wanness of the temples, the bruised marks beneath the great blue-green eyes. Yet, despite the thin drooped lips, a Rossetti or a Gustave Moreau would have admired the spiritual loveliness of her weary fragility. Whether she had beauty or not, there can be no question as to the witchery of the dreamy woman, half-Breton, half-Creole, whom a cool-headed savant had been eager to wed, despite a disparity of nearly forty years; whom a Bonald chose for his friend and favourite disciple; who was to prove at once the Laura and the Beatrice of Lamartine. In Paris a circle of aged scholars, philosophers, and savants surrounded her with delicate respect and attention. Julie sat as a child in their midst, and conceived, no doubt, no other way of life, when, on the morrow of her thirty years, heart, lungs, and nerves seemed to collapse in a desperate inability to live. Alarmed by this state of languor—of neurasthenia, as we should say—her husband had sent her to recruit her failing strength at Aix.

There she met Lamartine, and their meeting has glorified the lake and the valley. "Chère vallée d'Aix," wrote Julie, "vous n'étiez pas pour nous avare des joies du ciel!" They were so much alike that the people of the little town, seeing them together, took them for near relations. And, later on in Paris, the Memoirs of Brifaut (recording frequent

encounters with Lamartine, on quay or garden promenade) describe as the poet's sister the delicate young woman always hanging on his arm: "Une jeune femme, au front pâle, à l'air mélancolique, à la démarche lente et molle." As for Lamartine himself, Brifaut sets him down as an image of the Belvedere Apollo, slender and stately, the head poised high on a long neck, massy curls of dark chestnut heaped round a noble forehead, black-blue eyes deeply encased in large sockets beneath ideal brows. He, too, had something exotic in his aspect. With the taste of his times for whatever was foreign or rare, Lamartine liked to imagine himself of Saracen descent, the offspring of mediæval Moorish corsairs settled among the low mountains of the Mâconnais. And the proof of it is, he exclaimed, with the delightful philology of a Romantic poet—"the proof is that the true name of my ancestors was Allamartine!" Mashallah! here is proof indeed, enforced, he declared, by his own physical structure: "La taille haute et mince, l'œil noir, le nez aquilin, le cou de pied tres élevé sur la plante cambrée, le talon détaché, les doigts mordant le sol, les doigts de la main maigres, allongés et cependant fortement noués aux jointures—toutes marques de noblesse essentiellement Arabes"; or, as we should say, the signs of a nervous and rheumatic constitution.

When this son of the desert met Madame Charles at Aix, he had no aim or object in life. He had

read immensely, written much, felt little, and decided nothing. Despite his episode at Baia, he had not squandered the treasures of his heart. Although no model of a young man—vain, indeed, to an absurd excess, spendthrift, and something of a gambler—there was in Lamartine a quality unsmirchably pure. Literature and politics attracted him, but his taste in either was unformed and vague. To be a great poet or to die a romantic death alone seemed worthy of his ambition. He was twenty-six years old, and the winds as yet had wrung no cadence from the Æolian harp that was his soul.

What sort of woman was she who so profoundly was to modify the mind of this young man? What was Elvire? When, three-and-thirty years later, Lamartine took the world into his confidence (or, rather, into that half-confidence which seldom quite convinces and never quite confirms) in the pages of *Raphael*, he describes his Julie as a woman of the eighteenth century, in mind the contemporary and equal of her husband—a materialist, almost an atheist, at least an *esprit fort*.

"Elle fait croire au ciel et ne croit pas en Dieu!" like that heroine of *Jocelyn* in whom M. Séché sees the transfigured image of Elvire. Such an attitude appears strange in a lady of the Restoration;—stranger still in the writer of the *Letters of Elvire*, full of pious ejaculations and resigned religion. Still, it is possible that Madame Charles, born and educated in a period of religious disorganisation, living

in a circle of elderly *savants*, may have retained the rationalism of an earlier generation. She may have been, indeed, Lamartine's convert. And yet we cannot help mistrusting his love of system, his mania for generalising. We feel that, in writing his own love story, he is capable of making Raphael and Elvire typical not only of himself and of her, but also of the two great movements which divide the French ideal during the nineteenth century, the one making for analysis and the individual, the other for mystery and synthesis. Did Julie in very truth discourse in that Lucretian vein which Raphael records? Did she really say to her pained and pitying adorer—

"Il vous est resté deux faiblesses de l'intelligence, le mystère et la prière!

"Il n'y a point de mystère. Il n'y a que la raison qui dissipe tout mystère. C'est l'homme fourbe ou crédule qui a inventé le mystère; c'est Dieu qui a fait la raison. Et il n'y a point de prière. Car dans une loi inflexible, il n'y a rien à fléchir, et dans une loi nécessaire il n'y a rien à changer?"

Was the woman who inspired *Le Crucifix* a free-thinker? Who can tell? Lamartine, so little the slave of reason, was not docile to her logic. If Julie admitted a universal deity, inexorable and unconscious, deaf to individual prayer and blind to individual distress, Lamartine still lit a taper on the altar of his forefathers, trusted by a lifting of the heart to penetrate a sphere beyond our universe,

accepted his trials as an expiation, or as a God-sent means of accumulating merit, and kept in touch with all the moral talismans which have consoled the generations of the past. The vitality of his adoration was the light of his soul, and prayer seemed a power in him to communicate with a greater hidden Power, prompt to rescue and sustain. These beliefs had dwelt in him unconsciously from the time of his childhood. They suddenly arose winged, and in full force, as he strove to comfort the dear, dying woman he adored.

V

What were the relations of Elvire and Lamartine? The critics disagree. M. Anatole France believes that the poet would have preferred a pure platonic passion, but that at last the feverish Elvire inflamed him with her mortal ardours—

"N'accablons pas la mémoire de cette ardente Julie des louanges d'une chasteté qui lui pesait si lourdement. Il y a toujours quelque impertinence à se porter garant de la vertu d'une femme; mais quand cette femme a déclaré ses ardeurs, n'a-t-on pas bonne grâce à se taire? Vous prenez soin de la gloire de Julie; mais Julie ne jugeait pas de sa gloire comme vous. Ne lui faisons point des mérites vulgaires ni des vertus proportionnées à notre médiocrité.

M. René Doumic is inclined to the opinion of this great master; and it is M. René Doumic who has published the few remaining letters of the lady, accompanying them with an essay of classic charm, lucidity, conciseness, but of a psychology somewhat summary and superficial—the psychology of the amiable and sceptical man of the world. His is the book for the collector, the dilettante, the lover of tales. M. Léon Séché's huge volume of ill-assimilated erudition is, like all his volumes, open to that suspicion of bookmaking which mars a book. But his great digests or compendiums of information are invaluable to students of the romantic period. The critic of Lamartine can no more do without him than the critic of Sainte-Beuve. M. Séché, then, from the fulness of his learning, refutes indignantly M. Doumic, and I think he proves his case, though I am still inclined to ask of either gentleman the old question: "Comment faites-vous, monsieur, pour être si sûr de ces choses-là?" M. Séché is the true knight and nympholept of Elvire and her virtue. And it is certain that, not only in *Raphael*, in the notes to the *Méditations*, but in a score of passages scattered through his correspondence, his *cours*, his *Entretiens*, Lamartine speaks of "un culte idéal et passionné," a pure love working an instantaneous reform in a life hitherto frivolous and dissipated. Elvire is a heaven-sent guide and guardian angel: "J'aimais avec la pure ferveur de l'innocence passionnée une personne angélique."

He gave his only child the name of Julia. His wife was the confidant of his devotion to her rival in heaven. And the attitude of M. Charles to the young poet—the attitude of all the circle of Elvire —confirms the supposition (to my own mind absolutely evident) of a platonic devotion.

At Aix-les-Bains, in the autumn of 1816, Madame Charles and Lamartine spent some three weeks together—as strangers, as friends, as lovers. Then she regained her husband's, he his father's, house, not without many plans for meeting in Paris.

Elvire was a true Frenchwoman, practical and politic. While discoursing on romantic love, pantheism, and the ideal, she was none the less occupied with the temporal career of her young friend. As the constant hostess and confidante of the Baron Mounier and his wife, Lally-Tollendal, Lainé, the Viscount de Bonald, and other pillars of the Royalist and Conservative Right, she imagined herself in a position to place Lamartine in a *sous-préfecture*, at least, if not in some official post in Paris. No woman since Madame de la Fayette was more constantly occupied in finding an office or a pension for this or that deserving person in need of fresh resources; and here was a case where heart and soul would second her kind and managing disposition. She began at once with good advice, according to her lights—checked any wanton wandering proclivities in favour of Liberalism, freedom of the Press, and such-like pernicious heresies; distilled

into the young man the true *bon ton* of Royalist politics, and recommended him to write that Ode to M. de Bonald which was to serve him as a letter of introduction. Since he was so fond of poetry, here was an occasion when the Muse might prove of use! Bonald is still remembered, if only for one lucky phrase: "L'homme est une intelligence servie par des organes," which is a sort of hieroglyph of French idealism.

At that time M. de Bonald was the guide, philosopher and friend of a whole political party. His noble character and an excellent literary style palliated, so to speak, the extreme rigour of his opinions. To form an idea of his position let us imagine a Lord Morley reversed—a theocratic John Morley—the apostle of the Altar and the Throne; we cannot imagine a protector more useful to a young man equally apt at literature or politics. Lamartine, it is true, was in a state of innocence as to the qualities of M. de Bonald: "Je ne le connaissais que de nom; je ne l'avais jamais vu; je n'avais jamais rien lu de lui." But what young poet in love would consider such trifles an obstacle, when his chosen Muse, for her first request, sets a subject and demands a poem? The wild music of the blood is sufficient inspiration! And so one evening at Aix, climbing the wooded heights behind the house in which his idol had spoken of M. de Bonald, Lamartine composed his meditation on Genius—the first of his lyrics inspired by Elvire; the first, that is to say, inspired by

Madame Charles; for under this name of Elvire (henceforth reserved for the "gloriosa donna della sua mente") he had already celebrated the little cigar-girl of Baia, with that insouciance of poets who follow through a succession of mortals one constant ideal, one Harmony and Muse. The "Ode to Genius" is by no means one of the great lyrics of Lamartine. Something of Delille and Parny still clings to its form and its rhythm. But even here, already, the large and natural imagination of a new poet is manifest—

"Tel un torrent, fils de l'orage,
En roulant du sommet des monts,
S'il rencontre sur son passage
Un chêne, l'orgueil des vallons,
Il s'irrite, il écume, il gronde,
Il presse des plis de son onde
L'arbre vainement menacé;
Mais, debout parmi les ruines
Le chêne aux profondes racines
Demeure; et le fleuve a passé."

That is not the Lamartine we know. His genius will become more lofty, more luminous, more ethereal and only too abundant; the simplicity and the love of Nature, the sweet elegiac common-sense, are already there. Who runs, may read. Lamartine, so different from the poetasters who occupied the Paris of his youth, proceeds as naturally as a flower from a bough from the great prose idyllists of the age immediately before him: from a Chateaubriand, from a Madame de Staël, but especially, most especially, from his true spiritual ancestor, Ber-

nardin de Saint-Pierre, whose *Paul et Virginie* was one day to inspire a "Jocelyn."

VI

The Ode was sent to M. de Bonald, who accepted it with interest and admiration, and while Julie in Paris made a hundred plans for introducing the author to people of importance, he, at Milly, was occupied with her religious state of mind.

"Je la suppliais de chercher dans une religion tendre et nourrissante, dans l'ombre des églises, dans la foi mystérieuse de ce Christ, le Dieu des larmes, dans l'agenouillement et dans l'invocation, les douceurs que j'y avais goûtées moi-même dans mon enfance. Elle m'avait rendu le sentiment de la piété. Je composais pour elle ces prières enflammées et calmes qui montent au ciel comme une flame qu'aucun vent ne fait vaciller. Je lui disais de prononcer ces prières à certaines heures du jour et de la nuit où je les prononcerais moi-même. . . . Et puis je mouillais le tout de larmes; elles laissaient leurs traces sur les paroles, plus éloquentes et plus recueillies, sans doute, que les paroles elles-mêmes. J'allais furtivement jeter à la poste cette moelle de mes os. Je me sentais soulagé, en revenant, comme si j'y avais jeté une partie du poids de mon propre cœur" (*Raphael*, chap. liv.).

"Elle m'avait rendu le sentiment de la piété!" Religion was ever with Lamartine an emotion, a

sort of blonde blue aureole emanating from a world he looked at through a mist of tears. There was little reason for the faith that was in him, but it was not therefore less sincere : " Le cœur a ses raisons ! " The fair Freethinker, by enlarging his heart, awoke in him the impulse of faith. For nearly three months the lack of pence, which dogged and tormented the early youth and later age of the poet, kept him from his liege-lady. The Lamartines were poor, and if life was easy and large at Milly, where the wine and the bread and the meat were grown on the ancestral acres, ready money was a scarcer harvest which the dear improvident heir had already too frequently reaped. Fortunately a country neighbour, the especial friend and confidant of Alphonse —the young Viscount Aymon de Virieu—was established in Paris for the winter in a tiny entresol-apartment of the mansion of the Duc de Richelieu, in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin. On M. de Virieu's inviting his friend to share his narrow quarters, Madame de Lamartine opened her casket, drew out the last of her diamonds, and gave it to her son to defray the lesser expenses of a sojourn which might prove important to his future. We all have in our memories an enchanted spot, a golden Isle of Once. For Lamartine henceforth a sacred air hung about the low-ceiled Parisian waiting-room with the dark alcove where he slept (so little and so late), and the screened writing-table by the small round window on the court, where he read

and wrote and dreamed hour after hour, the whole day long, while Aymon de Virieu's modish friends streamed to and fro behind his hidden seat, till nightfall came and the hour when Madame Charles received. . . .

M. and Mme. Charles inhabited an apartment in the Institute of France where every evening a small, eminent, intimate circle informally collected. On the first evening of his arrival in Paris Lamartine sped thither, heralded by Aymon de Virieu. The door opened. Julie was standing by the mantel-piece, in the full light, her elbow indolently leaning on the slab of white marble, her slim figure, white shoulders, and delicate profile doubled by the reflection in the mirror. She was leaning forward, her head a little on one side, with parted lips, anxiously listening. She wore a gown of dull black silk, as black as her hair, hung over with black lace, round the line of the bust, the waist, the hem. A lamp upon the mantel-piece; the leaping blaze of the wood fire; the life, love, impatience of her glance,—all conspired to light up her pale bright face with a splendid animation.

That hectic spot on the cheeks, those gleaming eyes, that feverish sweetness reassured Lamartine, too much self-engrossed to be really anxious even about the woman he adored. Nor did he think it strange that M. Charles, M. de Bonald, all the staid old friends and counsellors welcomed so kindly the handsome young poet whose nightly visit was at

least a "distraction" for their poor Julie. He did not guess, what they knew, that her life hung by a thread. One of that wise and aged company is Suard, the journalist and musical critic—Suard, the "Glückiste." He too has a young wife, a beauty. One day she tells her elderly husband that she has ceased to care for him. "Cela reviendra!" he replies. "But I love another!" she murmurs, and he soothes her with a "Ça passera!" in a tone of gentle encouragement. Such were these gracious ironical survivors from an Ancien Régime, students of Nature, accustomed to her shoals and quicksands—consenting, at worst, to throw half their cargo overboard in order to keep the rest. Was Julie's fatherly husband of M. Suard's opinion? Was he reassured by Julie's physical danger? He placed no hindrance on the continued intimacy of the two young people, accepted Lamartine as his wife's elected "brother." Only, oddly enough, no post could be found insuring a permanent residence in Paris for the handsome young poet, who, when the spring was in full riot of flower, was forced, his funds and health exhausted, to return to Milly, still destitute of place or expectations.

The lovers wrote to each other constantly. And, sure of reunion, Lamartine returned to Burgundy tranquilly enough, for a romantic poet. M. France is right: although the memory of Elvire will prove the sovereign sweetness of all her lover's days; yet, in the season of their actual companionship, the

fervent, the dying Elvire was more passionately in love than Lamartine. He at least had the supreme resource of poetry. While he was waiting to meet Elvire again, Lamartine composed "l'Immortalité," "Le Lac"—poems from which romantic passion and classic purity radiate immortally commingled. In reading them we are lifted, as by a stroke of the wing, in a rapt upward flight, as sublime and yet as natural as the skyward impulse of that Angel of Rembrandt's, in the Louvre, who cleaves the upper air so swiftly, and yet looks back so tenderly to the earth.

VII

When we open the slender volume which contains the four sole love letters remaining of all that incessant correspondence we see but dimly at first what manner of woman was Elvire. The physical note strikes us first. In their fervour and their fever, these are the letters of a consumptive. And then, beneath the emphatic sensibility of the age, we note the sweet, material common-sense of the Frenchwoman. Elvire is full of counsel. She would fain have mothered her Alphonse as Henriette de Mortsauf mothered Balzac's sorry hero.

And there is little more! When we open some long-locked casket of feminine love letters we experience the sense of a period rather than the sense

of a person, just as in some century-old hanging press we say: "So this is what they wore!" and not: "Such was the taste of one vanished lady!" Only a great personality—a Julie de l'Espinasse or an Elizabeth Browning—triumphs over the vague generalities of the little language and affects us immediately as Herself. We see in Madame Charles a product of Rousseau, with the gift of tears, the declamatory tenderness, the taste for sentimental complications, peculiar to his heroines and god-daughters. Alphonse is her child; she is his *mère;* he has for her "une passion filiale."

"N'avez-vous pas dit, ne suis-je pas sûre que vous avez pour moi une passion filiale? Cher Alphonse, je tâcherai qu'elle me suffise. L'ardeur de mon âme et de mes sentiments voudrait encore une autre passion avec celle-là ou que, du moins, il me fût permis, à moi, de vous aimer d'amour et de tous les amours. Mais s'il faut vous le cacher, ô mon ange, si vous êtes tellement dans le ciel que vous repoussiez les passions de la terre, je me tairai, Alphonse! J'en demanderai à Dieu la force et il m'accordera de vous aimer en silence."

"Arrivez, arrivez, Alphonse; venez consoler votre mère. Je ne puis plus supporter vos cruels reproches; et l'idée déchirante que vous avez pu croire à un changement de mes sentiments fait un tel effet sur moi que je ne suis plus maîtresse de ma raison. Pour vous prouver que je vous aime par-dessus tout, injuste enfant, je serais capable de tout quitter dans le monde, d'aller me jeter à vos pieds et de vous dire: disposez de moi, je suis votre esclave. Je

me perds, mais je suis heureuse. Je vous ai tout sacrifié, réputation, honneur, état, que m'importe? Je vous prouve que je vous adore. Vous n'en pouvez plus douter. C'est un assez beau sort que de mourir pour vous à tout ce que je chérissais avant vous! Et que m'importe, en effet, et que puis-je placer à côté d'Alphonse qui pût balancer un seul instant les sacrifices que je suis prête à lui faire? S'il se rit des jugements des hommes, je cesse de les respecter. Je trouverai bien toujours un abri pour ma tête, et quand il ne m'aimera plus, un gazon pour la couvrir. Je n'ai pas besoin d'autres biens."

It seems that Lamartine, who received these letters (as ardent surely as those of Héloïse or the Portuguese Nun), one day accused Elvire of coldness or indifference. And she replies—

"J'aurais cru mourir plutôt que de vous écrire froidement. Une seule chose pourrait m'expliquer à moi-même ce dont vous vous plaignez. C'est si je vous ai écrit devant les autres et tellement vite à cause de l'heure, qu'il fallait étouffer toutes mes pensées. Je sens fort bien que quand un autre me regarde je ne puis vous rien dire. Il me semble qu'on m'écoute. . . ."

But in all this ardent medley of jealousy, remorse, provocation, passionate chafings, we see a passion and a period rather than Madame Charles herself. We die with our generation; the mind of Julie, the sentiments and scruples of her erring heart, are only a handful of dust, like her fragile body.

Once, jealous of that earlier Elvire whom

Alphonse had known by the shores of Baia, the poor lady questioned Aymon de Virieu as to the qualities of the fisher's daughter. The guileless youth replied: "Oui, c'était une excellente petite personne, pleine de cœur et qui a bien regretté Alphonse." And thereupon Madame Charles throws up her wasted hands to heaven: "Mais elle est morte de douleur, la malheureuse! Elle l'aimait avec idolatrie! Elle n'a pas pu survivre à son départ!" Is that the right way to speak of a "femme angélique"? Or was Lamartine's passion a delusion?

"Et moi aussi, cher Alphonse, vous me louez, vous m'exaltez et vous m'aimez, parce que vous me croyez un être supérieur. Mais que l'illusion cesse, que quelqu'un déchire le voile, et que me restera-t-il, si vous pouvez vous tromper ainsi dans vos jugements? Est-ce donc l'imagination qui s'enflamme chez vous? . . . Oh, mon ange, je ne puis le croire et cependant je tremble! Si un jour, cher Alphonse, on allait vous dire de moi: c'était une bonne femme, pleine de cœur, qui vous aimait."

Peace, poor lady! "Le Lac," "Le Vallon," "Le Crucifix," have made immortal the memory of Elvire.

VIII

Lamartine kept his tryst at Aix alone. Julie was dying.

> "O lac! L'année à peine a fini sa carrière,
> Et près des flots chéris qu'elle devait revoir,
> Regarde! je viens seul m'asseoir sur cette pierre
> Où tu la vis s'asseoir."

They never met again. Madame Charles died in Paris under her husband's roof, the old husband who for seven years survived her. Aymon de Virieu brought the despairing lover the crucifix which had received her dying breath.

Lamartine was at Milly. For three days and nights he roamed the woods and fields like a man distraught. When he returned it was to magnify the memory of his loss by those meditations which embalm the name of Elvire, her pious end, and celebrate her soul in heaven. They are: "Isolement," "Le Désespoir," "L'Apparition," "Souvenir," "Le Crucifix," "Les Etoiles." . . . "Julie était morte [writes M. Doumic] Elvire allait commencer à vivre. Comme on voit dans des légendes naïves et pleines de sens toute une floraison jaillir d'une tombe à peine fermée, ainsi sur la tombe de la jeune femme l'amour refleurissait en poésie."

In one of his Meditations, Lamartine feigns that God created for the use of men two different kinds of speech: the one articulate, sensible and variable;

the other mute, instinctive, eternal, universal. Those rare souls who command the "langage senti" express themselves in sighs, dumb ardours, sudden illuminations. It was in this burning and silent tongue, felt not heard, that Lamartine drew from his heart that secret elegy of Elvire whose broken echo haunts the noblest of his poems like a passion. We imagine that more than one century will repeat them with a tender predilection, and pause, in the middle of a stanza, to call up the burning, the fragile, phantom of Elvire.

THE END

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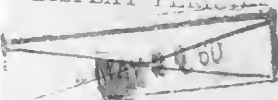

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